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So Our Histories Do Not Die

The Ball State University
African American Alumni
Oral History Project

**So Our Histories Do Not Die: The Ball State University African American Oral History
Project**

An Honors Thesis (HONR 390C)

By

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis was to conduct oral history interviews with African American alumni of Ball State University to record their life experiences and create a documentary film that expressed their thoughts and values. Conducting oral history interviews is a time intensive process both before the interview with regards to research and post interview with regards to transcription. Creating a documentary based on oral history interviews presents a challenge due to its sheer size and complexity. In the end the oral history interviews I conducted, and the resulting documentary I made, were meant to open the door for future historians to more easily be able to include the African American community in future histories by offering credible primary sources.

Acknowledgements

I would like to deeply thank Dr. Michael Doyle for being an incredible professor for two semesters and introducing me to the humanities of history. He started out as just another Honors professor but has ended up as someone who I know I could meet years later and still hold an hour or more conversation with and not miss the time at all.

I would also like to thank Monique Raechelle Armstrong-Makeni and Dr. Ruby Cain for agreeing to sit with me for interviews. Their participation allowed me to gain a developed perspective on African American culture and how different everyone live.

I would also like to thank Lisa Hensell, our GA, and my classmates Kristal All, Charelle Brown, Janie Fulling, Alan Hovorka, Rishad Readus, Charlotte Sipe, and Ellie Snyder for being wonderful partners on an incredibly difficult project that pushed our talents to the limit.

Artist Statement

Every person deserves to have their story told. While narrative films and movies can be used as instruments to tell stories, even the stories of certain people, it is documentaries that are more naturally geared toward telling the story of one person or a small group of people. Documentaries zero in on a topic, many times cutting out the distracting action and drama of consumer films and movies, and when focused on a person they allow that man, woman, or child to have their voice heard. In the documentary that I, and fellow students, created in the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Workshop, it was a goal to successfully relate to viewers the stories of specific people.

The documentary was, of course, only one product of the workshop that would tell the stories of African American alumni of Ball State. The purpose of the workshop was primarily to conduct oral history interviews to record life stories of the interviewees. Conducted and transcribed by students, the oral history interviews would then be digitized into Ball State's Digital Media Repository for perpetuity. The hope is that when the next history of Ball State is written, researchers will be able to utilize the oral history interviews to broaden their own work and include African American perspectives.

Between the documentary and the oral history interviews, I was doing two things that I greatly enjoyed; storytelling and helping people have their voices heard. It wasn't easy though, both came with their own challenges that have pushed me to grow beyond what I was when I began the workshop. Oral history interviews proved to be research intensive, with the added complication of human interaction and word-for-word transcribing required for a final product. The documentary, as with other motion picture

projects I've been involved in, leaned more heavily on skills I already possessed, such as video editing, but precipitated maturation.

Research

When thinking on the hardest part of conducting oral history interviews, it has become clear to me that it is the one thing never seen: research. To prepare for the oral history interviews we read three textbooks relating to Ball State, African Americans, and oral history. The first book was *Ball State: An Interpretive History*¹ by Anthony O. Edmonds and E. Bruce Geelhoed. This is Ball State's only history book, chronicling the birth of the university as a teachers college from the ashes of failed past attempts to its more recent past of the last decade. Reading the history of Ball State was useful because it gave me some background knowledge of what my, at that point in time, future interviewees might have experienced while attending the university. The second book, *The Other Side of Middletown: Exploring Muncie's African American Community*² was a compilation put together by a past Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry team of Ball State students that utilized oral history interviewing. The book was a wealth of knowledge about how African Americans in the Muncie area lived, furthering my ability to target specific questions for interviewees. The last book, *Doing Oral History*³ by Donald A. Ritchie, was a Q&A of how to do oral history interviews. Topics ranged from, ironically, how to conduct research to how to set up the interview space. All three books were time consuming to ingest, but after completing each reading, responding to daily sets of study questions, and discussing them in class I felt more prepared to conduct the oral history interviews.

The readings really drove home the fact that you have to know what to ask before you start asking. Advice given this semester was that interviewers should first use research to generate a skeleton of interviewees' lives to work with and then allow them to fill it in with detail, and it very much held true. Prior to each interview with a Ball State alumnus I received a short bio from them. Combined with the previous research from the two prior readings relating to history, I was able to craft questions and topics that were tailored toward each interviewee. This was important because my interviewees were of significantly different ages, meaning that some questions, like those related to the Civil Rights Movement and its effects on life, would be more suited for one than the other. In the end I have come to the conclusion that while the research involved when conducting oral histories correctly can be tedious and time consuming, it provides the tools for enriching and enlightening discussion with interviewees.

Interviews

I believe this is the next topic to discuss because the actual interviews, when preceded by proper research, are not difficult ventures. Being able to pull from a wealth of knowledge about someone due to the research I had done allowed for my interviews to move smoothly from topic to topic. In the end I would classify them more as conversations they felt so at ease. A good interview is the coming together of the interviewer and the interviewee after all. Unlike normal conversations, however, I had to be vigilant about what my interviewee said. When conducting an oral history interview, one has to be "curious on behalf of posterity," and must look over the shoulder at future generations. When talking with an interviewee, everything said must be explained

enough that future users can gain understanding without the copious amounts of contextualizing researching I completed.

An example of this that I personally experienced was during the interview with Monique Raechelle Armstrong-Makeni. While discussing the histories of her family, the conversation turned to an incident that occurred at Schaffer Chapel in the August of 1930. As a knowledgeable interviewer, I knew what Monique was talking about when she referenced the incident, but took a moment to request clarification because during the interview she had not previously given any context. Now, when future generations watch or listen to the interview they will know exactly what is being talked about. That is one of the most important jobs of an interviewer.

Transcription

After finishing an oral history interview, the next step is transcription. This is the process of writing down every word said between interviewer and interviewee in the interview. This was an entirely new learning experience for me. While I have created makeshift close captioning for a student show before in high school, transcripts are much more substantial. It was a good thing, then, that Dr. Doyle took my class to Bracken Library so that we could get a crash course in their formation through a workshop with some of the archivists of Ball State's Archives and Special Collections. The archivists showed us how to utilize The Baylor University Institute for Oral History's *Style Guide: A Quick Reference For Editing Oral Memoirs*⁴ and their own personal transcription wiki guide⁵. These guides really helped me with how research on how to format transcripts and answered many of the questions that arose as a first time transcriber.

The reason these written copies of interviews are important is tied to the digital age we live in today. Search engines on the Internet are how a majority of the digitally literate population traverses the Internet, and they use keywords to enable users to find what they are looking for. Videos by themselves only have a few keywords in their metadata relating to what they are about, meaning that finding specific, useful parts of an oral history interview would not be possible. That is where transcriptions come in; they provide keywords for search engines to find and timecodes so Internet users can jump to the parts of the interview that are relevant to what they are doing after searching. One of the great things about Ball State is that it maintains a Digital Media Repository that digitally archives all of its collections of such items as oral history interviews. The repository created a way for a program to embed the text of a transcript into the corresponding interview so that it would be keyword searchable. Users can now search the transcript text, click on a word or phrase they want, and be taken instantly to that moment in the video interview. This is a great thing because a significant addition to historical record is the body language of the interviewee during their interview. So much is communicated without words that it is sometimes vital to *see* what someone is doing while listening to them to get the full meaning of what they are trying to say. Conversely to all of that, transcripts allow users to just skip watching the video and pull straight from their text, as historians might do when looking for quotes for a history book they are writing.

Having completed two transcripts after the correlating interviews, I concur with any others who say that they are the harder part of oral histories. Listening and typing skills are what I worked the most during the transcription period. Using a program called

*Express Scribe Transcription Playback*⁶ I constantly paused, rewound, and listened to my two interviews second by second. You never notice how fast or slow someone speaks until you have to catch every word and write it down. Transcribing requires not only attention, but also precision. Misspelling or misquoting a word or phrase an interviewee said will lead to future users unable to find what they are searching for, the whole point of a transcription. Another issue is crutch words. Words called guggles, such as “um” and “uh,” are commonly used by speakers. They allow for enough time to think of what someone wants to say next. They also occasionally render transcriptions unreadable. When transcribing my interviews, I learned it becomes a professional choice whether or not to include a guggle, because sometimes they are left in if they add to the transmission of the essence of what is being said in that moment. In total, I would say I spent eighteen hours transcribing.

Documentary Editing

The big thing that I wanted to do at the beginning of my thesis work was to create the documentary film that would sum up the project. In its runtime of twenty minutes it was to include sound bites sourced from as many of the oral history interviews as possible mixed with those from all of the students who had conducted said interviews. I have had previous experience doing video creation in high school, so I knew what I was getting into. The sheer volume of information gained in the interviews, however, proved to be too much for me to handle alone. I freely admit I was overzealous in expecting to be able to do the documentary on my own, knowing now just how extensive oral history interviews become. But that fact facilitated personal growth. I had to rely on two

classmates to help me digitize, hunt down “knock out” sound bites, set up baseline video timelines for the documentary, and I had to accept that as how things had to be. I did, and I am grateful. I grew as a professional because I was able to set aside my pride as a videographer and filmmaker.

Editing itself is easy for me; I’ve been doing it for about five years now. The documentary’s challenge for me was how to present its message. As I said earlier, everyone deserves to have their story told, and the documentary was how, without listening to thirty-six hours of interviews, we were going to let the voices of these African American alumni be heard. To do this, I leaned on past experience. When telling a story, break it up—books have chapters for a reason—and so I pushed for the documentary to be divided into segments. My partners and I decided that race relations, education, and the gateway of the future were topics that were discussed by enough interviewees to warrant inclusion in the summative documentary. After days of sifting through interviews, sound bites, and possible combinations, I felt confident that we had put together a product that told the story of the interviewees and the project. Included are personal stories about racism, the importance of education, reconciliation, and gratitude that we have ensured that their stories will not die.

The inclusion of sound bites from students was to allow their voices to be heard as well, because the project didn’t just affect the interviewees. From editing the documentary together, I found that my fellow students had grown as people as a result of their participation in the project. One grew an appreciation for history, another found they had developed previously nonexistent school spirit, and yet a third came to the realization that those with experience and knowledge do in fact wish, even desire, to tell

their stories to others. I myself came to the realization that history is much more important and interesting than I had previously thought, a society cannot grow without truly coming to terms and learning from its past.

Conclusion

Oral histories are significant because they are someone's voice being heard, their story being told. The research done for oral histories is time intensive, yes, but it is required if interviewers wish to truly hear everything that needs to be said. I have grown from this project because I learned how to sit down with someone and, through pleasant conversation, pull from them stories they might have thought long forgotten with just a little researched information. The resulting interviews became primary sources for the world of the life and times of individuals who embody the experience of African American students at Ball State University. Transcriptions are a nightmare to do merely because they take even more time than research, but their function is increasingly vital to the existence of oral histories. Without transcripts, oral histories would be very unwieldy for historians and others to use, being hours of conversation to sift through. A documentary created from the sum of twenty oral history interviews is difficult to create, requiring a team of like-skilled partners, but can highlight the crucial themes a group of people want to get across to viewers. This project has allowed me to grow, both as a professional ever-sharpening his skills, and as a person maturing through hearing the stories of an older, worldlier generation.

Endnotes

- ¹ Anthony O. Edmonds and E. Bruce Geelhoed, *Ball State University: An Interpretive History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
- ² Luke E. Lassiter, ed., *The Other Side of Middletown: Exploring Muncie's African American Community* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004).
- ³ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, Third edition, Oxford Oral History Series (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- ⁴ "Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral History Transcripts," Last modified January, 2015, <http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/doc.php/14142.pdf>.
- ⁵ "Ball State University Libraries Oral History Transcription Guide," Last modified January 23, 2015, https://www.bsu.edu/libraries/wiki/index.php?title=Ball_State_University_Libraries_Oral_History_Transcription_Guide.
- ⁶ NCH Software, *Express Scribe Transcription Playback*, Application, <http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/>

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Ritchie, Donald A. 2015. *Doing Oral History*. Third edition. Oxford Oral History Series. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Supplements

1. Monique Raechelle Armstrong-Makeni, interview by Samuel McCowan Utley, March 29, 2015.
2. Monique Raechelle Armstrong-Makeni, interview by Samuel McCowan Utley, March 29, 2015, Transcript
3. Ruby Cain, interview by Samuel McCowan Utley, April 02, 2015.
4. Ruby Cain, interview by Samuel McCowan Utley, April 02, 2015, Transcript
5. *So Our Histories Do Not Die: The Ball State University African American Oral History Project*. Documentary. 2015. Muncie: Ball State University, 2015. DVD.

Archives and Special Collections

University Libraries



Ball State University
Bracken Library, Room 210
Muncie, IN 47304

Phone: 765-285-5078
FAX: 765-285-8149
Email: libarchives@bsu.edu

Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project

Archival Identification:

Interviewer: Samuel Utley

Videographer: Kristal All

Supervisor: Dr. William Doyle

Interviewee: Monique Raechelle Armstrong

Date of interview: March 29, 2015

Utley: Hello, my name is Samuel Utley, and today's date is March 29, 2015, and I am interviewing Monique Raechelle Armstrong-Makeni on Ball State's campus as part of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project. Thank you for agreeing to the interview Monique.

Armstrong: Thank you.

Utley: So, we're going to start out with the simple questions. Uh, when and where were you born?

Armstrong: I was born here, in Muncie, Indiana on March 28—So my birthday was yesterday—

Utley: —Well happy birthday—

Armstrong: —Thank you. Nineteen eighty and three.

Utley: Okay, 1983. So, you're—you're a local, then?

Armstrong: I am. Born and raised here.

Utley: All right. So you've never moved anywhere else?

Armstrong: The time that I spent working on my undergrad-uh, is the time I spent outside of Muncie. And I came back for graduate school.

Utley: All right. Could you tell me a little about your family?

Armstrong: My family is from here.

[1:00]

The Armstrong side of my family-uh, migrated North, I guess we would say, from the Knoxville area. And my great grandfather came here in the early '20s. And then, my great-grandfather, he married a woman whose family has been in Indiana for as far back as we can trace. So they lived in three adjacent counties, so that's Rush, Henry, and now Delaware since pre-Civil War. My mother's family, her uh, her mother's side is from Mississippi and her father's side is from Alabama. And they came to Indiana during the '50s. So, we have some early arrivals, and some late arrivals in regards to my maternal and fraternal side of the family.

Utley: Wow, that's pretty interesting. What are your parents' names?

[2:00]

Armstrong: James and Donna Armstrong are my parents.

Utley: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

Armstrong: I have one sibling. His name is James Jordan Armstrong.

Utley: Okay. And, when you were growing up, what do you—what would you say your parents did the most to instill in you? What kind of morals or values?

Armstrong: I had the privilege of having generations here. And my parents instilled hard work, commitment and a desire for more in me. I'm the first child so—of two—so I also had a lot of responsibility. And, they gave me a sense of identity by way of my family. So, I was thrilled when the first question was about my family.

[3:00]

Because those stories, within the family, is what helped create an identity for me, but also reinforced that—those values that they were trying to instill in me. For example, my great-grandfather was the first elected public official in Muncie, from District 6, here on city council. And it's funny, this is an election season, so I see, you know, all of—all of the billboards and yard signs that are around. And, one of the things that they always shared with me about him was that he would say. "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today." And I think that's quote from, you know, one of our past presidents. And, "Do something right the first time." You know, those types of things that-uh, reinforce a solid foundation in regards to how we should live our lives, both professionally and personally.

[4:00]

But also reinforced the name that I carried. And the responsibility that comes along with that.

Utley: All right. What were some of these stories you said that they would tell you as a kid—as a child.

Armstrong: Well, that same grandfather was president of Knoxville Colored High School. And, he came to Indiana during the '20s, and was a politician, and was pushing towards change in community. So heard stories of the Klan calling, and being resilient in the midst of death threats. I heard stories of professionalism.

[5:00]

Being cognizant of how the law can work for you as a small business owner. And how you—how you should be a contributing member of society and can participate in the political process. The maternal side of my father's father's family were charter members of Schaffer Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. So I grew up hearing stories that are now reviving. And it's interesting to me because, a lot of people within the last two or three years have said, "We didn't know the history." I'm like "I grew up with this history." This was—these were things that we talked about at my kitchen table because they were part of my family's history as well. So, understanding the past, so that I can understand who I am, so that I can be an active participant in the future—

[6:00]

—There were many stories, but they all helped frame who I am and what I'm doing now.

Utley: Okay. Would any of the stories have been about the Civil Rights Movements? Were any of your close, close family involved in any of those movements?

Armstrong: Well I shared with you all my great-grandfather being an elected official—the first African American public elected official here. So he was considered a part of the pre-Civil Rights Movement. So I have letters that were written to my grandfather—I shouldn't say I—we—they're part of our family archives—that were written to him. He was very actively engaged in the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] chapter here. Have letters from Hurley Goodall to my great-grandfather who he considered a mentor.

[7:00]

So my great-grandfather being a part of the pre-Civil Rights Movement, uh—the—the stories of—of engagement—he was a black Catholic [laughs]. So, you'd think that we have an understanding of what engagement looks like, but engagement often times means that you sit at the table and advocate through

relationships. So, those stories of the Civil Rights Movement were always told to me as one of a lifestyle. Not necessarily one of events.

Utlely: M'kay. What was your great grandfather's name?

Armstrong: My great grandfather's name was Ray Armstrong.

Utlely: Ray Armstrong, okay. These stories that you grew up with, they've influenced you a lot, it sounds like.

[8:00]

Armstrong: Oh abso—absolutely. Often times when I would enter rooms where I was the only African American female—when I enter rooms now when I am the only African American female—I draw upon those stories. I draw upon my ancestors. And understanding that I'm not the first.

Utlely: All right. So, we were talking about your family. What about the community around you?

Armstrong: Oh, wow. My—[unintelligible]—excuse me, I'm sorry about that [laughs]. My family made the decision to buy a home on the northwest side of Muncie. So the house that I grew up in, and my parents still live in, is on the northwest side of Muncie, but my community is very much the Whitley community that I work in now.

[9:00]

The family shoe repair shop is in Whitely. Schaffer Chapel, I shared with you earlier, is in Whitely. My church home—I was raised in Union Missionary Baptist Church—which is in Whitely. The home that my father was raised in is in Whitely. So I have very fond memories of running up and down Highland Avenue to Austin Heights, and biking around the corridor on Central Avenue in front of my grandparent's home. So although the house that I was raised in was on one side of Muncie, my community is definitely the Whitely community. That's where aunts, and cousins, and play-cousins all lived and chastised me, and pushed me, and encouraged me.

[10:00]

And, I'm grateful for that experience.

Utlely: It sounds like the community kind of raised all the children, would you say? Everyone had a hand in raising the children?

Armstrong: I just left church, and I had a conversation with a woman that had a hand in raising me. As a girl, she was the director of the housing authority when I was a girl, and a member of the church, and always modeled professionalism and femininity in our community. And I would say she very much had a hand in raising me. The beautiful thing about being raised in Muncie is that—I come from a family where my father worked in manufacturing.

[11:00]

My grandfather, my mother's father, is from rural Alabama. And, they lived a blue-collar life style, with middle class values. And my mother's best friend was a CEO [Chief Executive Officer]. So it's just like that's the beautiful thing about the community is that regardless of socioeconomic status, or class, the lines are blurred when looking—looking at, and deciding to, raise children together.

Utley: All right. That sounds pretty nice. So, it's obvious that the religion was very important—and is still very important to you. What impacts has that led in your life?

[12:00]

Armstrong: Religion was the best gift that my mother gave me. And when I say religion I don't—I don't mean the ritualistic aspect of religion—I think as humans we find those things comforting—but the ability to tap into my spiritual self, is a gift. And if I was to pick up a self-help book of any kind in our modern day, they encourage the act of meditation and reflective thinking, but I call that prayer. And the ability to tap into something greater than yourself can catapult you from a period of despair to an elevated state. It's—It's miraculous [laughs].

[13:00]

It's—what that can do. And being raised in the church, having an opportunity to tap into the best of people, and myself, is a gift and helped me in my youth tremendously. Out of pain came relationship with Christ. And I'm very grateful that that gift was given to me because I've seen how those that have not received that gift have, well uh, wavered I would say. It gives consistency. And also, in the midst of that, I came from a very structured home. My mother definitely set the tone, so we knew what our week would look like at the end of the previous week, because it just repeated itself. Mondays for me was piano lessons. Tuesday I was at Motivate Our Minds.

[14:00]

And Wednesdays I was church for Bible study, which my mother taught with the children. And Thursdays I was at Motivate Our Minds. And Friday we would rent a movie and have pizza and [laughs]. And Saturday we would prepare for

Sunday and have starlight band at the church. And then Sunday you're at church all day. So—and then Monday it starts all over. So whether it was three days of church a week, or two days of Motivate Our Minds, and a day of piano lessons—the routine of things. I'm grateful for an opportunity to tap into something greater because it's helped me confront the challenges of life. I'm more than grateful for—and it's a gift that I hope to pass on to generations to come. So the church was important to me because it offered community, it offered Christ, and something greater than myself.

[15:00]

But it also gave me access to leadership. My first presidency was in the church. My first public speaking opportunity was in the church. So I was able to participate in things at seven, eight, eleven that some people don't have the opportunity to engage in until later. You know, *Robert's Rules of Order* I was first introduced to as a child. So those—those experiences I'm very grateful for.

Utle: That sounds very amazing. So you mentioned Motivate Our Minds. That's a um—what would you describe that program as? Or anything like that?

Armstrong: Well it's evolved over time. But Motivate Our Minds is an education enrichment center that works with children after school and in the summer. When I was a student in the program it was two days a week in the evenings because co-founders worked during the day.

[16:00]

But it's the mission and passion that I worked with in every day on behalf of children. My brother asked me, he said "So when are you—how long are you going to do what you do?" and I said "I don't know until it releases me." It wasn't—it wasn't really something that I planned. It was an opportunity that came that I was prepared for. But, I believe that education is... extremely important. It's fundamental. And I believe that everyone deserves a premier education. And how that comes is the responsibility of those that have it.

[17:00]

Utle: All right. We'll come back to Motivate Our Minds later on. I would like to go into elementary school and your scholastic career. Where did you go to elementary school?

Armstrong: I went to Mitchell Elementary School. Which is on the northwest side of Muncie.

Utle: What years, is this if you—

Armstrong: I was in kindergarten in like '89, so I'm thinking—I remember '90-'91 was I think like Desert Storm—Bush [laughs]. So I was there until late '90s, maybe mid-'90s. I think.

Utley: What was the makeup of the school? Was it mostly whites, mostly blacks, was it a mix, equal mix?

Armstrong: Mostly white. I was the only black girl, or one of two or three black girls in most of my classes during elementary school.

[18:00]

That's why Motivate Our Minds experience was so transformative for me, because it was the contrast to my experience during the day.

Utley: Did you recognize any different treatment in elementary school because you were one of the only black children?

Armstrong: Oh absolutely. Not only was I one of the only black children, but—I didn't understand this as a child—but I was also not like the other students in that I didn't ride Eastern or Western horses. I didn't go to the Lakes on the weekends. So, not only was there a difference in regards to my race and ethnicity, but there was also a difference in regards to how I was socialized as a child.

[19:00]

My first grade classroom... I remember the teacher didn't really like—something wasn't right in regards to the experience and I couldn't really understand it because I'm a first grader. But now I just think that the teacher didn't like me and I didn't like her and I just [laughs] and it just affected the way that the relationship impacted the education that I received. And as an educator, although I am an administrator, I teach students every day. I always say that no significant occurs outside of relationships. And because of that experience early in my education, I make a special point to esteem all of the students that I work with and also to know them so that I can motivate them.

[20:00]

Utley: When you were in elementary school, were there any teachers, or administrators, who really impacted you in a positive way?

Armstrong: Oh I mentioned first grad—second grade was totally different. I saw my second grade teacher at Emens just a week ago and as unmotivated as I may have been in the first grade, in the second grade I was given an opportunity to excel. I also started working at Motivate Our Minds. Well I didn't start working there [laughs]

my mother enrolled me [laughter] at Motivate Our Minds in the second grade as well. So, I remember how that second grade teacher talked to me.

[21:00]

I remember her energy and her—her zeal, for not just Monique, but all of her students. And she still has that same energy. Educators are extremely important.

Utley: And what was the second grade teacher's name?

Armstrong: Janice Richard.

Utley: Janice Richard. So, as a child it sounds like you were mostly involved with Motivate Our Minds. Were there any other extracurricular activities?

Armstrong: Oh, uh, I played sports. I played volleyball, basketball. I played everywhere. Whether it be the Roy C. Buley Community Center, the Muncie Boys & Girls Club, my parent's front yard [laughs]. In addition to sports and Motivate Our Minds I was active in clubs.

[22:00]

Delaware County Pride Team, which does drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention education for—for young people. I served on youth boards, did diversity and race relations work as a high schooler. So, I was very active in the community as a young person. And that stems back to the expectations of my family as well.

Utley: All right. You moved us right on into high school. So um, [Monique laughs] where did you go to high school?

Armstrong: I went to Muncie Central High School. I am a Bearcat, third generation Bearcat. And I was in high school from '97 to 2001.

Utley: All right. And what was the biggest difference that you would say was—from elementary school and middle school to high school?

[23:00]

Armstrong: Oh. Diversity. Although high school was only about 11% African American, and at that time I didn't see a large non-English speaking population—maybe things have changed now—but definitely, definitely I wasn't the only student of color and longer. Also, people were from very diverse areas of town as well. There was more contrast in regards to socioeconomic status and that's just because at that time, there were not choice schools, so you went to a neighborhood school. So you lived in communities with people like you. So now, within the high school experience you lived in a community with people like you and people not so much like you, [laughs] as well.

[24:00]

But, you all have an opportunity to interact on the court or in the classroom, which was awesome. I enjoyed high school. [Samuel laughs]

Utley: So, the treatment that you received in elementary school for being one of the only African American students—was it diminished any in high school? Or did you notice any?

Armstrong: Well the beautiful thing about the elementary school experience that I had, is I had an opportunity to build relationships with the kids in my neighborhood. And I also had an opportunity to build relationships during my elementary years with kids not in my neighborhood. So by the time I went to high school I knew a lot of people because I'd crossed a lot of lines that other people had not had an opportunity to cross. I lived in—lived may not have been physical—but I jumped throughout communities.

[25:00]

And that benefited me in high school. I had the privilege of having lots of friends and associates not so much tied to the basketball experience, but the social experience that I had in elementary and middle school because I jumped throughout Muncie. Thanks to my parents.

Utley: Okay. It took probably midway through the 20th century before the Muncie area had African American teachers in their high schools. Did you have any African American teachers in what—in your experience through high school?

Armstrong: I did. My—I had one, my art teacher. Starts with an H [laughs].

[26:00]

I had one. There—there—DiLynn Phelps was administrator when I was in high school. There were other African American teachers, they just weren't my teacher.

Utley: Okay. And in elementary school you said it was your second grade teacher who was the most impactful to you. In high school, was there another teacher who was very impactful?

Armstrong: I would say Richard was my teacher during a tipping point. There were other impactful teachers. I'm going to tell you an elementary school story really quickly.

Utley: Okay.

Armstrong: When I was in the second grade—that's when I became a student of Motivate Our Minds—in the second grade I was reading below level. In the fourth grade my teacher, Mrs. Fisher, she said to me—I remember this very vividly.

[27:00]

She said, "Monique. You're—you should not be reading below grade level." And I remember I was bumped from the textbooks that were below grade level to the textbooks that were above grade level. And it's important to understand what my elementary experience was like. You had, like, reading cells. And they were by colors. So everybody knew what level their peers were on, because you all went to reading at a different time. Right? So that was transformative for me. For my fourth grade teacher to recognize my competency. Another great teacher. Fourth grade, second grade. In third grade, there was a lot of math. I remember a lot of math in third grade.

[28:00]

So I had—I had some—some really good experiences in elementary. Just as well as I had some experiences that kind of hurt my feelings. So, high school. I had a lot of really great people that invested in me in high school. In regards to an educator that really pushed me forward, I don't know if it's so much an educator that pushed me forward or if it was the community that pushed me forward. Because I was so active, there were just so many people that exposed me to great opportunities. I do remember the negative stories.

[29:00]

When it came time to apply to school, I had a friend of the family that was helping me work through applications and things of that sort. Although my father went to college, he didn't graduate from college. And the way that he approached education was not the way he expected me to approach it. So I was sitting in my counselor's office, and I told my counselor that I wanted to apply to Ball State, Butler, and Spelman College. And he said to me black people don't go to Butler. And I said, "Okay, well I'm still going to apply." [laughs] I—as a student had the opportunity to read some of the history on the university and it made me—could understand why he would say that based upon what happened at Butler in the '20s. But that was 2000?

[30:00]

And, we were still having those types of conversations with our guidance counselors? So. He's retired [laughs].

Utle: What did happen at Butler in the '20s?

Armstrong: My understanding is that the president of Butler in the '20s had a relationship with the leader of the Klan at that time. So he was sympathetic to their cause. Although Butler, in 1855, was one of the first institutions to enroll anyone, from anywhere. Meaning black, white, whatever.

Utley: So, in high school all of the extracurricular activities—Motivate Your Minds, um, all that kind of went into hyper-drive it sounds like? You were so active outside of school.

Armstrong: Right. At—in high school I'd aged out of Motivate Our Minds.

[31:00]

At that time Motivate Our Minds was only an elementary program, although I would go back and volunteer. I've always been a volunteer at Motivate Our Minds, whether it be answering the phones or cleaning windows. But, I shared with you earlier my mother had a rigid, busy schedule for her children. And by the time I was in high school I could choose what I wanted to participate in. And I chose to remain a busy teenager. So yes, things went into hyper-drive. Definitely. Sports, I played sports three seasons. Clubs, still participated in those. Travel as a result of it. o my life as a teenager was I guess practice for my life as an adult [laughter].

Utley: Well, that's a good thing.

[32:00]

Was college a personal choice, or was it an expectation, or both?

Armstrong: Expectation definitely. I grew up knowing that I was going to college. Where I went I thought was my choice [laughs]. But—I uh, I definitely just knew that it was what would happen. Although, my father and mother did not graduate from college, and neither one of their parents did, I do have a great-great-great-aunt who went to college in the '20s. She went to Wilberforce College with my great-grandfather Ray Armstrong—his sister.

[33:00]

And then my grandfather, Ray Armstrong, and my—I'm sorry. My grandfather, James Armstrong—my father and grandfather had the same name—but James Raymond Armstrong is my grandfather. His sister's children, they all went to school. And my father's first cousin is why I wanted to go to Spelman College because she's a Spelman alum. So although—we had—we have diversity within our family in regards to collegiate experiences. And I grew up listening to their

stories, whether they went to Michigan or Spelman College. I just knew that it was going to be a part of my story eventually.

Utley: So you knew you were going.

Armstrong: I knew I was going. I just thought I would be the one to choose where I would go.

[34:00]

And I—to some extent I did [laughs].

Utley: Ball State—it was right around the corner from where you lived. It was here in town. But you went to Butler.

Armstrong: Yeah.

Utley: What was—what was that choice?

Armstrong: Why? Why did I choose not to go to Ball State for my undergrad? Um, at that time, Ball State wasn't as pretty as it is today. This is a gorgeous campus [laughs] now. And being from Muncie I didn't understand the jewel that Ball State is. I also had always lived in the community and wanted an opportunity to spread my wings. Although I didn't spread them too far [laughs]. I wanted a smaller experience.

[35:00]

And originally I thought I was going to Spelman College, which is in Georgia. So the Butler experience was the compromise. And my freshman package, Butler offered a better recruitment package than Ball State did. So uh, I chose Butler. And I think that maybe my counselor telling me that black people didn't go Butler helped as well. [Sam laughs]

Utley: All right. Even though But—Butler wasn't very far away it must have been an entirely new experience going from high school to college. What was that like?

Armstrong: Butler was a lot like my elementary school experience. But. Butler was in the middle of Indianapolis. There were people from throughout the state, but beyond the state as well.

[36:00]

A lot of the ideas that I developed as a child were challenged as a student at Butler. Well, I just think that that's just part of the collegiate experience. Period. You know, you meet people that are different than you. I was a resident assistant,

so I had a resident assistant from Kuwait, I had developed a relationship with a young lady from Palestine who's considered a princess. Like, and this is—I was a student in 2001 when things were in question, in regards to our safety, and our security. And a lot of the ideas that may have been reflected in the media I was able to challenge as a result of relationships as a student.

[37:00]

It was a really beautiful time for me. Because the collegiate experience you have the opportunity to have the best of both worlds. You're an adult that is engaged in learning yet you have the energy of youth [laughs]. It's just—and if you take advantage of those responsibilities—those opportunities, you can accomplish anything. I had an opportunity to write for *The Collegian*, and intern at *The Indianapolis Star*. So although I was in the Butler bubble, I was still engaging with the larger world around me. And I recently returned from Europe where I gained a national identity. In 2001, August, my best friend and I were taking an escalator up in Paris out of the train station.

[38:00]

And I saw black people for, like, the first time other than the three people I was with in Paris. And I walked up to them, like a stereotypical American, and I said, "Good morning. Can you help us find The Louvre?" And they turned their back to me and they said, "You are American." And would not help me. In that moment, I realized, that only in America am I a black woman first. To them I was an American first. One I was very arrogant, I should have at least said *bonjour*. I learned that later.

[39:00]

But—two, I formed a national identity for the first time. That was August of 2001. 9/11 was the next month. I formed another national identity in September. And that experience shaped my collegiate experience. And also framed my identity as an adult. Had I not had those experiences—the Parisian experience, 9/11—I don't think—I don't know if I would have been able to engage in some of the conversations that came later as a result of exposure opportunities to people from throughout the world.

[40:00]

And recognizing how they may perceive me culturally based upon my own lens and need to learn. So. The collegiate experience was great.

Utlej:

Good. All of the influences that had led up to your collegiate life, I would say, um, did any of these have an impact on your choice of a major in Public and Corporate Communication?

Armstrong: I—you—I enrolled at Butler with that major, Public and Corporate Communication. I added the Journalism piece to it because I love telling stories. And um, writing at that time. The Public and Corporate Communication major came because I wanted to work in the non-profit sector as a communications officer.

[41:00]

I—was just a dream, like, as a senior in high school. And it fit for the four years that I was there. And I still use those skills every day.

Utle: How so?

Armstrong: Oh. As the Executive Director of a very small non-profit, I have to be everything to everybody all the time. And what's interesting is that even today, you all are recording this piece, my first exposure to working behind a camera came as a result of my major. My work in branding or framing conversations is a skill that I was first exposed to as a result of my major. It's an integrated major, so I took business classes, and journalism classes, and cultural classes.

[42:00]

So, because it was integrated, or diverse in nature, there's always something that I have to tap into.

Utle: Okay. Where did you—I have no idea what Butler's campus looks like. Where did you live? Did you live on campus or off campus?

Armstrong: I lived in the girl's dorm all four years. This past week, I actually took a group of students from Motivate Our Minds to visit the campus. So those students have visited Ball State, and now they've also visited Butler. But, I lived in the girl's dorm for four years. Two years as a resident and two years as a resident assistant. And I lived with great people.

[43:00]

Utle: One of the biggest challenges when going to college that's kind of in the backs of all of the students' minds are financial problems or situations. What was it like for you?

Armstrong: I did not have the amount of money that most of the students that I went to school with had. I worked two jobs. I shared with you that I was a resident assistant, in the midst of being a student. I loved that part about my college story, because I remember sleeping an average of four hours a night and there are seasons that I have to tap into that phase in order to motivate myself. Even now, as an adult. I

worked really hard because I had to. My father lost his job about halfway through my college experience. So my parents weren't able to give me the assistance that they thought they would be able to throughout college.

[44:00]

So, yeah, you step up to get things done and I did it in four years, because I had to. I shared with you earlier that the financial package that I received my freshman year was better than Ball State. Well I had a lot of non-renewable scholarships, but I wasn't ex—savvy enough or exposed enough to truly understand what that meant when I made the decision. So, my package my junior year didn't look as good as that package my freshman year. But, all is well. And I'm doing okay, paying back my student loan [laughter].

Utle: So you worked as an RA and you had another job, were there—was there any time for extracurricular activities in the collegiate life?

[45:00]

Oh absolutely. Because, you know, I—I shared with you that being involved in community is a part of my DNA, so I chartered an NAACP chapter on Butler's campus. I was actively involved in voter registration and advocacy. I sang in the Voices of Deliverance Gospel Choir. I was involved in Women's History Month planning activities as a student at Butler. One of my favorite pins, when I was an undergrad, was my "this is what a feminist looks like" pin [laughs]. I participated in as many opportunities as I could.

[46:00]

I was a member of the Black Student Association. I gave tours on campus, while working at Starbucks [laughs]. So I was a busy collegiate as well. I don't know how not to be—how not to be busy. When I'm still I'm thinking, Well what am I really supposed to be doing? I can't [laughs].

Utle: You mentioned that your collegiate experience was kind of like your elementary experience and earlier we had also talked about the incident in the 1920s at Butler. What was the diversity like, both in the student realm and the staff realm?

Armstrong: Well because I gave tours, you know, I'd learnt—I had to learn some stats as an undergrad. And, I was once again the only one in my classrooms.

[47:00]

What was different about my Butler experience is that I may be the first woman of color that a student interacted with. Which is interesting because this was 2003, 2004. But it's just because a lot of people are from rural Indiana and

have—I mean it's college so just like I'm—I am having my first experience conversing with a lady from Palestine, or Pakistan, or Kuwait, they're having their first experience with a black girl from Muncie, Indiana. So, there's grace in college right? That's the beautiful thing about it. It's where you go to be exposed. Hopefully.

[48:00]

But, in the classroom, socially, once again I'm in a situation where uh, I don't drive a Land Rover or a BMW, you know? It was just a difference in regards to a class. That's all. It was nothing unfamiliar to me.

Utley: All right. After graduating from college, some people decide to take a little rest before going into their masters, and some jump right in. What did you do?

Armstrong: I jumped right in. And it's interesting because I interned at United Way of Central Indiana as a diversity intern and I thought, Oh this is where I want to be. You know, I worked really hard to get this internship. I'm working really hard within it. I like what I'm doing every day. I'm working independently [laughs], you know? I didn't have a direct supervisor. My supervisor left to become the CEO of the Arthritis Foundation.

[49:00]

So, I was able to show that I can accomplish work without someone looking over my shoulder. And they offered me a loaned executive experience. And that loaned executive position is a temporary position, but it's fundraising position for their campaign. And I at the time I was talking to my mentor, Dr. Linda Keys, who taught here in—here at Ball State—in the Urban Planning Department and worked in the Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs. I think it's just called Sponsored Programs now. So I was talking to Doctor Keys and she said, "Monique what are you doing?" And I said, "Well, they offered me this position." And she said, "Does it have—what—does it have benefits? What are the benefits like?" [laughs] I said, "Well I'd have to work—it's just—Mmm. That doesn't sound like a great position."

[50:00]

And she said, "Well are there other positions at United Way?" I said, "Yes, but they want to have a master's degree. But I'm still going to apply." And she said, "Mmm, so what are you going to do with your life? Are you going to go to graduate school?" And I said, "Well yeah, eventually. But I want to take a break off." And she said, "Well, Ball State has great programs. You need to look at the website. And there's an Executive Development for Public Service program at Ball State in adult, higher, and community education. And you want to work in the non-profit sector. And you're going to need a master's degree, so why don't

you just go to graduate school?" She said, "Did you have over a three-oh your last four semesters?" I said, "Well, yeah." And she said, "Well, look at the website and I'll talk to you on Monday." And when I talked to her she told me to apply. I applied. And I'm here [laughter]. So that's how I found myself back in Muncie, in graduate school. I worked as her graduate school in Building Better Communities through Grantsmanships. So we traveled throughout the state, teaching people how to write grant proposals. I had not been successful writing a grant proposal.

[51:00]

I'd written one grant proposal. It was for the Roy C. Buley Community Center, when my friend Micah was the executive director. Who's now the executive director of the Boys & Girls club, who I work with often. And we were not successful. And I was traveling throughout the state teaching people how to write grants, and they were successful. So I was esteemed, I was helping [laughs] helping them be successful, which was motivating to me. And I enjoyed my experience here in graduate school. At that time my mentor, Dr. Keys, she was also president of the Motivate Our Minds board of directors. So I still had that connection. I volunteered at MOMs [Motivate Our Minds] every Friday.

[52:00]

I didn't have class that day. At that time Motivate Our Minds didn't have students, so there wasn't, you know, a whole lot for me to do. So I cleaned windows and vacuumed floors. And after I graduated, the community kept me. It was a great, great experience. Those years that I spent here as a graduate student. And I was still young.

Utley: What was the different—what you say the difference was between Butler and Ball State?

Armstrong: Oh Ball State. I felt like I was at a historic black college or university when I came to Ball State [laughs]. Although Ball State wasn't as—or I should say, maybe, Ball State is not as diverse as people may want it to be, it was more diverse than my Butler experience.

[53:00]

And because I finished my undergrad in four years and went directly into graduate school, the undergrads and I were the same age, the graduate students and I were in the same classes. So I had an opportunity once again to cross barriers. While I was in graduate school we, along with a colleague of mine, David Taylor, we revived the Black Student Graduate Alliance. So like, all of their original documents David and I worked on together. And I guess there's a reoccurring theme in regards to my experience. I like to charter things [laughs].

So, my understanding is that they're still meeting. Dr. Keys was our advisor. I'd cook and we'd get together and have meetings.

[54:00]

And I, once again, was a student that was engaged in the community and busy on campus.

Utley: So the atmosphere was a lot more to your liking then?

Armstrong: Oh I love Ball State. I started graduate school the same year that President Gora started here. And was able to grow here along with the university as well. I—I love learning, and I love learning through relationships as well. One of my professors in graduate school, Joe Armstrong, no relation, he teaches a collaborative learning class. And that model is a model that I use as well when I teach.

[55:00]

So, I—I love learning and I love learning by way of other people.

Utley: You grew up in the Muncie, Delaware County community.

Armstrong: Mmhm.

Utley: So you were exposed to Ball State as a child. Then you came back as a graduate student.

Armstrong: Mmhm.

Utley: And one of the reasons you say you didn't come to Ball State as an undergrad was because it wasn't pretty [laughs]. What's the difference between when you saw it as a child to as an adult coming back as a grad student?

Armstrong: As a child, I just—I remember two buildings as—well, three, as a child. Worthen Arena, LaFollette, and Teachers College. I remember those three buildings. It's funny, it's—we're in the Burkhart Building. First time I've ever been in the Burkhart Building [Sam laughs]. And Richard and Dorothy Burkhart are just jewels. Or were jewels in our community.

[56:00]

What I remember about those three buildings is that they looked very stark. Now, you walk on campus and you have beautiful McKinley. In 2005, when I started graduate school, that's when they opened up McKinley. And, you know, you have this beautiful sidewalk that was designed for students to cross campus.

There's a beautiful art museum that I didn't visit as a child, but now I visit often. There's—there's beautiful people that are doing research throughout the world that I didn't have an opportunity to meet as a child, but as a student, had an opportunity to engage with

[57:00]

And, as an adult are a part of my broader community that I can have conversations with. Exposure, growth, individually, and awareness of resources is what made Ball State attractive to me as a twenty-something that I just didn't understand as a teenager.

Utley: Good answers [laughs]. I didn't know where to place this in the questioning, but you indicated you were married.

Armstrong: Mmhm.

Utley: Let's talk about that. Where—when was it? And uh—

Armstrong: I'm a newlywed. I've been married almost four months, I think. I—today's the twenty-ninth of March, and I got married on the first of January.

[58:00]

And— it's funny. It's a beautiful thing. My husband is an international student here. He's working on his master's degree. So we'll both have graduate degrees from Ball State, which is really cool. We'll both be Cardinals. I guess we both are Cardinals, right?

Utley: Uh-huh.

Armstrong: And, I'm a little bit emotional because love is a beautiful thing. And you've been asking a lot of questions about my family and the stories of my family. And those are all stories that I will be passing down to those that will come through me and after me. And I'm really grateful that you all are doing this project as well so that our histories do not die.

[59:00]

One of the beautiful things about the privileges I've been offered to know my family story is that the experiences of those that came before me are a part of my experience even though I did not live them. Which is—I'm very grateful for that. So, I'm a newlywed. He's Kenyan. We—I shared with you that I had an opportunity to go to Europe as a teenager. Well I went back as a professional as a result of the Children's Garden at Motivate Our Minds. And this was in 2008. I

went to Terra Madre in Turin, Italy. Which is the world meeting of food of communities.

[1:00:00]

And we, being Motivate Our Minds, were invited to share with them our program in a generational children's garden. So I'm sitting in a genetic modification of food workshop and uh, my now-husband approached me after that workshop. He was a journalist with Nation Media Group and was covering the event. And under the premise of needing a quote [laughs] we started a long conversation. So I met my husband at a conference in Turin, Italy as a result of Motivate Our Minds. Best thing that I've inherited outside of my family have come as a result of Motivate Our Minds experiences.

Utley: All right. What is your husband's name?

Armstrong: My husband's name is John Makeni.

[1:01:00]

Hence the Monique Armstrong-Makeni.

Utley: All right. So how—he was an international student-

Armstrong: -He is an international student.

Utley: He is—sorry he is an international student-

Armstrong: -He is. Mmhm.

Utley: Um, did—he lives here now?

Armstrong: Yes. Yes. Lives here now, in Scheidler Apartments.

Utley: Okay.

Armstrong: Like, my cousins that came before us that were students here at Ball State. He's studying Communication Studies. Brilliant, brilliant guy. What else would you like to know about him? [laughs]

Utley: Does he have any plans after graduating as a—or getting his degree?

Armstrong: Well uh, at this point, I really don't know what opportunities may present themselves. He's very diverse in his experience, very worldly.

[1:02:00]

Speaks four languages. So, this girl from Indiana—just really excited every day to have a conversation with [laughs] with the most special person in my life about the world. It's—I shared with you that as a collegiate I loved engaging with my residents from diverse backgrounds. And I have international festival every day. Charity's (??) an international student so he has friends from Bangladesh and China and—so I have an opportunity as a result of the college that's in my town to not only engage with the professionals and the faculty, but also the student and hear experience. So where life may take us, I don't know. It may be Dubai, or back to Nairobi, or down the street [laughs].

[1:03:00]

I'm excited that the journey has started and it's almost seven years later. The world has not been a barrier. You know, living in this modern day is a beautiful thing. There's Skype and a transcontinental experience is open. I remember in 2008 when John and I met, he said, "Okay. Are you on Facebook? Okay. May I Skype you?" I spent a lot of time talking via Google Talk. Like all of these things that are a part of our model—modern experience, are very foreign to my parents.

[1:04:00]

Like, what is Google Talk? You can talk to somebody on the continent of Africa for free? [laughs] Or—or FaceTime? I notified my parents of my engagement via FaceTime in Malindi. Like [laughs] you're talking to us from Kenya, for free? [laughs] It's a beautiful thing.

Utle: That it—yeah, it is. It's definitely something that our generation enjoys.

Armstrong: Yes.

Utle: That kind of privilege. Once you graduated with your master's from Ball State, did you keep any ties to the university through organizations, activities, with the students—once you graduated?

Armstrong: Mmhm. I'm a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority. So I was active in the reactive of collegiate chapter here through my sorority.

[1:05:00]

I worked for Motivate Our Minds. So we have over a hundred and twenty Ball State students that volunteer at our organization. So I often times feel like I'm a satellite office of [laughs] of the university. My first board chair, Charles Payne, who was in leadership here at the university—so I visited campus at least two, three times a week. So although I lived in and worked off campus, I definitely professionally and socially was still engaged on campus. So that town and gown

experience was not, and still is not, a part of any type of barrier that I may experience in the community.

[1:06:00]

And in addition to that, because I'd gone to school here I knew my way around here. And my friends and donors are here. So I—I recreate here. Is that how you say it? [laughs] I don't know if that's proper or what not. But I still worked out on campus. I still went to basketball and football games. So although I graduated I didn't leave.

Utley: All right. It's good to have ties with where you've been. I saw that you've been awarded many times for your hard work in education, and leadership, and service, and Motivate Your Minds—Motivate Our Minds, I'm sorry. What accomplishment in life—everything that you've done—has meant the most to you? Or made the most impact to you?

[1:07:00]

Armstrong: That's a tricky question. Not a question I was expecting. I have a mentee. Her name is Dariane. And my mentee is a freshman at Indiana State. Didn't, you know—wasn't really excited about the Indiana State experience or the decision to go to Indiana State. But being that, you know, Ball State and Indiana State have a relationship, we'll roll with it. But, I'm just being a little silly when I talk about her choice to go to Indiana State. When I drove Dariane and her grandmother to Indiana State for her orientation, the sense of pride that I had overshadows any of the awards that I may have received early in my career.

[1:08:00]

Dariane came into my life as a result of my Motivate Our Minds position. Her grandmother came into my office and said, "I cannot raise this child on my own." Her father had recently died. And I promised her grandmother that I would not leave this child. I didn't know what I was getting into at all. I just—as a member of the community, as the executive director of Motivate Our Minds, Dariane's one of our students—I felt a sense of responsibility. So, we're on campus and the pride that I felt is overwhelming. Because this young lady that I'm not blood related to, but am related to as a result of experience is making the choice to engage in the most beautiful experience that I ever received.

[1:09:00]

If you hear me talk about my education, it's not so much about what I learned in the textbook, it's about what I learned from the people around me. And she can tap into that. She's from Muncie like me, and the world is open to her. Having an opportunity to play a part in that blows everything out of the water.

Utlely: Well, let's go into Motivate Our Minds then. It's come up numerous times in the conversation. Exactly what is Motivate Our Minds?

Armstrong: The mission of Motivate Our Minds is education children and families to grow and flourish.

[1:10:00]

We are an education enrichment center that works with children after school, and in the summer, in grades one through eight. Using certified teachers the learning of students is extended. So our certified teachers, or faculty, work along with Ball State mentors to supplement the education of young people. There are exposure opportunities through Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Kiwanis K-Kids. But most importantly we serve as a bridge between community, family, and school. For children's sake. So what exactly is Motivate Our Minds it may be different for Kevin and Kristen, but the goal is to help them both achieve academically.

[1:11:00]

Utlely: And how long has Motivate Our Minds been around? You said you were involved when you were a child. It must be an older organization?

Armstrong: Well, Motivate Our Minds was founded in 1987 by two women, Mary Dollison and Raushanah Shabazz. So Motivate Our Minds has been around for not quite thirty years. We'll be thirty years soon.

Utlely: And starting as a child, you've basically been involved your entire life?

Armstrong: I have. Since age seven it's been a part of my experience.

Utlely: All right. And you've gone from being a student, to being a volunteer, to—what are you in the organization now?

Armstrong: I'm the executive director now. I served the shortest term ever on the board of directors. And I've done everything. From cleaning toilets to being entertained with leadership.

[1:12:00]

Utlely: And all of your experiences that you've gained throughout your life, and all of the maturity that you've gained, would you say that that helped you in your position?

Armstrong: Absolutely. Absolutely. I was hired at the age of twenty-four. So I was very young. And for a long time I didn't tell people my age. I thought [laughs] I thought that they may judge me as a result of my youth. And because of my

height and the way that I carry myself people always thought I was older anyways. But there were a lot of people that I thought I was fooling that I was not. Because they know me, I'm here. But, it was just like [laughs] a—I guess a way to motivate myself and encourage myself.

[1:13:00]

But the experiences definitely prepared me for what I'm doing. Actively engaging in the community prepared me. My elementary prepared me. A lot of my opportunities as a executive director of Motivate Our Minds included individuals whose parents I went to school with. So I had a frame of reference as a young professional.

Utle: Why are programs such as Motivate Our Minds important?

Armstrong: Well schools cannot do everything.

[1:14:00]

Families cannot do everything. I shared with you that I was enrolled at Motivate Our Minds—I was enrolled at Motivate Our Minds because I needed to be motivated. And my mother could not do that by herself. So programs like Motivate Our Minds are important because there are individuals who want to, and need to be, a part of children's education. And not every child is as privileged as Monique as well. So I shared with you earlier that I feel that education is something that every child deserves but it's the responsibility of those that have it to share it so that they may receive it. Well, we being Motivate Our Minds are a platform to share.

Utle: All right. What would you say—personally, Motivate Our Minds has been a lifelong thing.

[1:15:00]

Is there a—is that a normal thing? Do people normally stay involved and integrated so long?

Armstrong: Those that I engage with do [laughter]. But is it a normal thing? It's kind of like—it's like your hometown. Is it a normal thing for everyone to stay in their hometown? We're all different. There is not anyone else on staff that was a student at Motivate Our Minds, but that's the question. But there are individuals that still give, that still want to know what's going on, that have children enrolled at Motivate Our Minds that were past students.

[1:16:00]

Utle: All right. What in your experience is the state of—would you say race relations or just the state of the Delaware County slash Muncie slash Ball State area?

Armstrong: I think that we still have a lot of work to do. I shared with you earlier that my husband is an international student and we spend a lot of time talking about the United States versed other countries. And how the conversation on race is approached. One of the challenges that we as Americans have is that we often times do not engage in that conversation outside of the academic setting. And even within the academic setting, not everyone has that conversation.

[1:17:00]

One of the recent conversations I had included a reflection on what has happened in other countries like South Africa where they actively had a reconciliation opportunity. We still have not had that. We in the United States, I believe, and my experience in Muncie, Delaware County, Indiana is that we have a community that engages broadly in avoidance, denial, and delay. I lived in a building here in Muncie. And the building that I lived in would only rent to white women. It was built in the '30s.

[1:18:00]

And I had a conversation just the other day with a man whose grandmother lived in that building. And he said, "They probably can't do that any longer. Only rent to widowed, white women." But he didn't use the word white, he just said widowed women. And he did not know that I knew, as a resident, that I was probably one of the first black women that lived there [laughs]. But, I didn't push that conversation because he didn't use the white, he paused there, I filled in the white in my head. So when I say avoidance, denial, and delay often times I can be a participant in that based upon whether or not I perceive what—that person is willing to engage in that conversation.

[1:19:00]

When I have a conversation with someone about Schaeffer Chapel and they share with me that they did not know about that story, and they're from the same community as I am and I grew up hearing those stories because my family members participated in that experience, I would say that's a part of avoidance, denial, and delay. I'm—I turned thirty-two yesterday. These people are sixty-four, you know like it's just [laughs] avoidance, denial, and delay. These same individuals that I have a conversation with about those race relations experiences that maybe tied to that historical site, some of them had family members that were there when the lynching occurred. Yet they did not talk about it. It's just—it's just because there's also some—the reason why we have avoidance, denial, and delay is because there's some shame as well. And then, some people are still living it behind their door as well.

[1:20:00]

What is it, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act? That is a part of my newsfeed [laughs] even as we speak. What that will mean for us ten years from, I don't know, what that will mean for us ten days from now. I don't know. But it's a conversation that we need to continue to have.

Utley: Just for clarity, could you go over the Schaeffer Chapel and lynching story? Just because, without reference, it would sound a little odd.

Armstrong: Ah, understood. So the final public lynching occurred in my mother's home town, Marion, Indiana. The bodies were taken from Marion to Muncie to Schaeffer Chapel church.

[1:21:00]

So a lynching—a lynch mob, a church, a mortician. All related to the community, the Whitely community and my first expose to that public lynching occurred in my family. I read the book when I was eleven. I went to the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. I saw—as a child I saw the picture there and I thought, Wow. Like this—people other than my family know about this? [laughs] In most recently, the story has been pushed forward as a result of Whitely neighborhood council efforts to preserve the church.

[1:22:00]

Utley: From when you were a child, er—from then, to when you were a child, to now, have you seen a noticeable change in such topics and such?

Armstrong: Well it depends on who you're talking to. I see different things. The educated, more enlightened have conversations and are exposed. But yet, there's still a large population that have not had the privilege of education or exposure that I have an opportunity to engage with that are still somewhere around eighty-nine in regards to how they may choose to enteract.

[1:23:00]

Utley: And bouncing off of that, where do you think—where do you think it's going to go from here? [Unintelligible] the future look like?

Armstrong: Well, if people are having these conversations at Starbucks I think that we hopefully will be pushing towards the conversation of reconciliation. But then, do those that are a part of the solution go to Starbucks? Definitely. Do those that need to be a part of this solution go to Starbucks? Maybe not. So, it—if they're having this conversation at McDonald's and Walmart, we've made it [laughs].

Utlely: So, you have made it very clear that education is something that everyone should have.

[1:24:00]

What would you say to—what advice would you give African American students who are looking to further their education or dreaming about further education?

Armstrong: You're education is dependent upon your attitude and your ability to take advantage of opportunities. There's something to be learned from everyone but in order for you to accept that lesson, you must first open yourself up. So, my advice to a young person, a younger Monique, or even to myself right now, is to be prepared for opportunities that may arrive by first investing in yourself.

[1:25:00]

Spiritually. Professionally. And personally.

Utlely: Before we close the interview, is there anything I haven't asked that you would like other people to know about your life, career, or Ball State experience?

Armstrong: This is just the beginning [laughs]. I—I must confess that this is all a little overwhelming. Just because I have not achieved yet. I'm just am working and actively participating in my community. I'm excited to about what the future may bring. And I'm so grateful that you all are collecting stories as well.

[1:26:00]

I often times forget that everybody's story is important to the phase of life that they live within. As we were talking earlier I was thinking about, like, the slave narratives. These are just regular folk, that just lived. So just living is enough. And those that are highly motivated and high achievers often times were always pushing toward the next goal. You said, "What advice would you give?" I would say, well, you probably should just live [laughs]. And all of those things will come as well. I don't think that anyone ever really sets out to do something spectacular and momentous. Just engaging in conversation impactful enough.

[1:27:00]

Utlely: All right well, on behalf of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project, I'd like to thank you for your participation.

Armstrong: Thank you.

[1:27:13]

End of interview

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Ball State University African-American Alumni Oral History Project

Archival Identification:

Interviewer: Samuel Utley

Videographer: Michelle (Ellie) Snyder

Supervisor: Michelle (Ellie) Snyder

Interviewee: Dr. Ruby Cain

Date of interview: April 2, 2015

Utley: Hello, my name is Samuel Utley. Today's date is April 2, 2015, and I am interviewing Dr. Ruby Cain on Ball State's campus as part of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project. Thank you for agreeing to the interview Dr. Cain.

Cain: Thank you, for asking.

Utley: Uh, we're going to start from the very beginning. When and where were you born?

Cain: I was born in Camden, Arkansas. And I was born in 1951.

Utley: All right. Did you spend most of your childhood in Arkansas?

Cain: Very little of it. I—My family moved to Detroit, Michigan and—my father moved there in order to find gainful employment. Once he did that, he sent for us. And I was probably two or three years old at the time.

Utley: All right. And what was your family like when you were growing up?

[1:00]

Cain: Well, my family was pretty—I guess pretty, pretty close knit. But one thing that was unusual, in that time, is that my mother, she was a teacher in Arkansas, and when she moved to Detroit she didn't have a certification in that city so she couldn't teach. And she worked for the United States Navy. She began as a secretary and then she went—she got promoted up. At the time of her death she was, oh—I'm trying to think. Like a purchasing analyst. Yes. But what's really interesting about that is that, you know, in that era most of the women were—worked from the home, stayed at home, and took care of the family.

[2:00]

And took care—my mother she was—

Utley: Groundbreaking.

Cain: She worked. Well, it's kind of interesting. When you're young you don't think anything about it, it's just your normal. But when I start reflecting back on it as I became an adult—my father really made enough money that we could have—that she could have worked. You know, she could have stayed with us but she did choose to work. And unfortunately I didn't get a chance to ask her why she did that but I assume it probably had something to do with um, a sense of independence. And a sense of, you know, self-worth and contribution.

[3:00]

Utley: All right. What were your parent's names?

Cain: Ruben and Ellen.

Utley: Ruben and Ellen.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: All right. Did you have any siblings?

Cain: One sister.

Utley: All right. And what was her name?

Cain: Her name was Cons—is Constance Denise. As a young child she was called Denise. Her nickname was Nicey. But when she got to high school she decided she'd rather go by her first name, as Constance. And her nickname was Connie. So depending on what people call her you knew how long they had known her [laughs].

Utley: Growing up, what values did your parents try to instill in you?

Cain: Probably responsibility and definitely education. As a child that was the only responsibility that we had. Is to get our education.

[4:00]

And my father used to say, "There's nothing more important than you getting your education. You—whatever else, you make sure you get your education.

Because that's one thing that they can't take away from you." And he always talked about going to college. And so, it was never a question of if, but just a question of when. So we never thought of it as an option, because they—they talked about it, you know, from when we were young. And were very consistent with that message so [laughs]. It was just, you know, just a natural part of growing up. You go in, you know, to elementary school, junior high, high school, and then to college.

Utley: All right. You said your family was very close knit.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: Did that extend to the community?

Cain: Um, with both my parents working, there were not many opportunities for them to interact within the neighborhood.

[5:00]

However, we were very active in our church. And very close to our family, the family that lived in the Detroit area. And then, both of their parents lived in Camden, Arkansas. So every year, for the—two weeks we'd go back in the summer time to visit family there. So, when you work all day, you know, and then you have to come home and take care of the house and feed the family you don't really have a lot of time to interact with, you know, like the neighborhood. Now, as children, we did more. And my parents knew some of the neighbors, but usually when they came home they spent time with us.

Utley: Tell me a little bit about how you interacted with the community [wristwatch beeps] as children.

[6:00]

Cain: Well, playing [laughter]. And I—we would—the different kinds of games we played were, you know, riding bicycles, playing jump rope, we played marbles, played jacks. A lot of the games that I don't think the children today play [laughs]. Paper dolls. I remember—we could do that inside as well as outside. I remember at one point a few of the neighborhood, you know, neighborhood children we started a club and we wanted to raise money for our club. So we had a bake sale [laughs]. So baked cupcakes and went up and down the neighborhood selling the cupcakes.

Utley: With your parents working very hard, every day, in matters of discipline was it a community effort or did they kind of leave it up to your parents when they got home?

[7:00]

Cain: Well, we—when we were young, we were not home, you know? You know we would stay with a babysitter. And once we got a little bit older we would—we were latchkey children. So once we got home, we went in the house called, you know, called our mother to let her know we had made it home and then maybe about an hour or so later she would be home. So we didn't—we didn't actually venture far from our house. Most of the—most of the children came to our house. So it wasn't like there was something that neighbors had to do. And we were pretty well behaved children [laughs].

[8:00]

For the most part we did what we were told to do [laughs]. And we had—we had chores. You know, cleaning the house, or—and back then, you ironed your sheets. I remembered that. So [laughs] I remember ironing my father's uniforms. And, you know, he had them very well starched and he liked his shirts with no creases at all in them. So it would take—it seems to me like it would take about a half an hour to iron just one shirt. Just one long-sleeved shirt [laughs].

Utle: You mentioned they—the neighborhood kids would come to your house.

Cain: Yes.

Utle: Uh, Detroit is a very big city. Did you live in the suburbs or the city?

Cain: In the city.

Utle: Okay. Earlier you mentioned you were very—your family was very involved in the church instead of the community. What was the extent of that involvement?

Cain: Ca—uh. We would go to Sunday school.

[9:00]

And then we'd have the church service afterwards. And if there was an early afternoon service we would just stay at the church for that. Or if there was an evening service we may go home and go back. But—my mother was a Sunday school teacher. And then, we served on like the junior usher boards, the junior choir. I'm trying to think if there was—and of course we went to Sunday school as well so. It was kind of like an extended family. Because you'd see everybody, you know, at least once a week unless we went back. My mother would go the Sunday school teacher training or, you know, the weekly reviewing of the lesson and everything before you taught it on Sunday. And so, I remember going with her a lot for that too [laughs].

[10:00]

So—but most of our church member—none of our church members lived in our, you know, neighborhood. They lived all over the city of Detroit. So, if, you know, for weekends we might go visit family and sometimes we'd go visit some of the members of the church or—I'm trying to think if there's anything else. Or some of our family lived in Michigan but not in Detroit so it might be like a day trip to go somewhere or maybe we'd go to a park. Belle Isle was really, you know, a really fun place for kids to go. So they might take us across the [unintelligible] of the river to Belle Isle Park [laughs].

Utley: Did the connection with the church continue as you got older, went to college?

Cain: Yes. It did.

[11:00]

Utley: All right. Always a good thing.

Cain: Yeah I joined the church when I was—let's see here—probably about ten years old. But—and I had a lot of friends from the church as well. And as I got older, probably—thinking high school—some of the children who went to church were in my class. But none of them were in my class in elementary school. So those were like good friends as well as, you know, playing with the neighborhood kids [laughs]. It's kind of funny, you know, because I'd never thought about that before. My father, he was a bus driver, and he worked a split shift. So, you know, he'd work four hours and then he might off for about three or four hours and then go back to work, you know, another four hours.

[12:00]

So my mother would get off work about four o'clock, but my father would probably not get off until maybe a couple hours or so later than that.

Utley: All right. Nowadays there so many different denominations of Christianity. What was your family's denomination?

Cain: We were Baptists. And I would probably say we were a part of the Progressive Baptist Convention. There's a lot of Conventions and a way that I would usually identify it was black Baptist. Because the black Baptist Churches were a bit different than the white Baptist Churches then. Detroit, even though they didn't have legislative segregation, you had de facto segregation. So the neighborhood where we lived almost everyone was black—African, or African American. And the schools we went to were pretty much, you know, like—I'd say like 98% almost African American black.

[13:00]

Utley: So when you were a child you still recognized the discrimination that went on? Or did you not recognize it when you were a small child?

Cain: No, I didn't. I think—I'm trying to think when I actually recognized it because most of my interactions were with people of my culture. And so it was a very nurturing, affirming interaction. But as I had more interactions outside of my culture I probably at that point started to see that there was something different. And I remember when we would travel back to Arkansas, we'd go by car.

[14:00]

And we'd always have—my mother would, like, cook food that night, before we left. And so it was really, you know, for us this was really a, you know like, an exciting part of the trip because she'd have all this food in here. You know now, you know, looking back on it as an adult it was because there weren't too many places that would serve blacks once we got past the Mason-Dixon line. And even some of the gas stations, you know, you may not be able to go to the restroom there. They'd let you buy gas, but as a, you know, as a kid you didn't even think about that or realize it. You just, you know like, knew about your reality. And I think that Nikki Giovanni—she has a poem called *Nikki-Rosa* where she talks about the fact that if, you know, others looking in on her [unintelligible]—would talk about the fact that she grew up very poor and the things she didn't have but for her, her childhood was very happy.

[15:00]

So. So as a very young child I didn't notice the racism. Now when I went to high school, the high school I attended was predominately white and it was a lot prevalent at that point. And there were some interactions outside of the house where, you know like, with police, you know, or seeing some of the things that the police did to others that were—would cause a level of dissonance. And I don't know if I thought about it as racism at that time but definitely—And when I talk about racism I'm not talking about just racial prejudice but it's the combination of racial prejudice plus societal power.

[16:00]

Where there are institutions or things that disadvantage a whole culture. So, as a child you don't think that deeply [laughs].

Utley: True.

Cain: And you don't have a frame of reference to do it in anyway.

Utlely: We were talking about elementary school, middle school, and high school. What was the name of your elementary school?

Cain: Pingree Elementary School.

Utlely: And your middle school?

Cain: Barbara Junior High. We're going a long ways back [laughs].

Utlely: And which high school in Detroit did you go to?

Cain: Cass Technical High School. And Cass was a public school but you had to apply to go there. It was a unique—a unique type of school.

[17:00]

It was really a college prep type of format. And there was a technical school or a vocational school that combined with Cass—which is why the name was called Cass Technical. It was Burles (??)—was the vocational school part, but they kept the name as Cass. And so a lot of our courses you took—you actually used college textbooks. And it was rated in the top ten of all public and parochial schools in the country. So it was a very high quality education. And my junior high was very—it was a very high quality as well. Course, you know, at the time I didn't know that. Now my parents so—wanted us to go to Cass. I would have preferred to go to the neighborhood high school and stay with my friends but, you know, that was, you know, they made that choice and, you know like, of course I went along with that.

[18:00]

And I had to take, you know, so—so I no longer could walk to school when I went to Cass, I had to take three city buses in order to get to the school which was in the downtown area.

Utlely: What was that like, taking three buses just to get to high school?

Cain: I guess it's—you know it was probably challenging but, back at that time everybody took the bus so it wasn't my first time on a bus. I'd been on buses before to go different places. And it would—in the morning it would be during the rush hour and sometimes there would not be a seat.

[19:00]

So you'd have all these books, and this was before backpacks so, you know, you'd have six courses so your books might go like, from here to here, and if there was no place to sit you had to kind of hold your books and hold onto the

hand—you know like, the handle that was like behind the seats in order to, you know—if the bus stopped abruptly so you wouldn't fall over. And sometimes the people on the bus would actually offer to hold your books, which was pretty nice. Yeah [laughs].

Utley: In Muncie, black teachers weren't hired until the late 1950s. When you were in elementary school, middle school, and high school did you have any black instructors?

Cain: Yes there were teachers in all of those. But the majority of the teachers were white.

[20:00]

We didn't have, like, the legislated segregation where, you know, when they integrated the schools the—you know, a lot of the black teachers lost their jobs. So Detroit was never—we never had where you had to close some of the schools. But we still lived in a very segregated area. And when I was kid I looked at the demographics at that period of time, and it was about maybe 15% black population and I didn't realize it as, you know—as a child I didn't realize, you know like, I'm around a lot of black people or I'm around, you know like, a lot of white people. But most of the time I was around people who looked like me. And it wasn't until I got older, high school, that I started interacting with a lot more people who didn't look like me. And then at work, of course.

[21:00]

And so I had different experiences at that point on a more regular basis that were really pretty high level of dissonance. And, now of course, Detroit is like 85% I guess black, African American. And it seems like you never would have thought at one point it was such a smaller—a much, much smaller percentage. And yet, you know, your given area is like a city within a city [laughs].

Utley: You've mentioned a couple times now that your high school was more predominantly white.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: Were there any experiences of discrimination that you recall?

Cain: Yes. Yes. And the majority of the experiences were more with the teachers than with the students. Usually students who, you know, don't want to be around black, black—you know just didn't interact with you at all.

[22:00]

And it wasn't an issue because I had friends there who were black. But, a lot of the classes I took—because I was very interested in math and of course most of—once you get out math that's required and start taking the electives, it's going to be more predominantly white and predominantly white male. But, I recall one instant—one instance with a teacher where—and it was a math teacher who gave me a grade, gave me a C, and I'd never had a grade lower than a B on any of my tests. And I'd never had a C before. My grades were usually As and, you know, occasionally Bs.

[23:00]

And my parents, particularly my father, was very, you know, ad-adamant—adamant about us doing our best. And it was like, I didn't want to take a C home to him [laughs] so what am I going to do here? So I went up to the teacher and I said to the teacher—and this, this was really hard because our culture—teachers are authority just like your parents are authority and so you don't challenge them you know. What they say is, you know, pretty much the way it is. And so, I've got this, you know, dilemma here. What am I going to do here? So I go up to the teacher and try to say in a very, you know, nonthreatening and respectful way that I don't think this is, you know like, you know like, my grade because I, you know, I says I didn't have any grades that low.

[24:00]

And he didn't talk to me. He just, you know, kind of like looked past me. And the student who sat beside—behind me, she was European American, female, she came up and she said, "I think you gave her my grade. You gave me a B and I should have had a C." And he did not acknowledge her either. And, you know, so that was really a hard, hard thing to deal with. And I had another teacher who did something similar. And my mother actually went up to the school that time. Now for the math teacher, the next time, he did give me the higher grade.

[25:00]

So after that—and you'd have like first report card marking, second report card marking, and the third was your final. So my final grade was much higher. But my mother went up to talk to her it was—she'd given me a grade that was not, you know, did not correspond to any of my, my assignments—the grades on my assignments. And the next day in class she made fun of the fact that my mother came up there to talk to her. So I told my mother about it and she—I think the next time she went to the principal. And that—after that was—the teacher was, you know, not friendly but she gave me grades that corresponded to my, you know, not—I believe I got an A out of that class. And then I had to take her again.

[26:00]

And I didn't want to take her again. But she was very pleasant the next time. She didn't make fun of my mother or make fun of me.

Utley: During the early—earliest portions of your life, the Civil Rights Movement was really starting to get into swing.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: When you were a child what did you see of that in Detroit?

Cain: Well in Detroit you had the radio stations where, you know, you could hear Dr. Martin Luther King speaking. And sometimes, of course, he'd come to Detroit. And if he came to a particular venue that speech might be on the radio. And then, of course, at that time Malcolm X was also a very well known speaker.

[27:00]

There was a large Black Islamic, or the Nation of Islam is what their called, in the Detroit area. So I could hear the speeches from, you know, both of those.

Utley: Did you actually ever get to see them in person?

Cain: No. I never—never got to see either one in person.

Utley: What about events that were—that are kind of historically famous now like the Little Rock, or the Greensboro events that were so highly televised?

Cain: Well, I was—I was young when the Little Rock Nine went to school. And believe it or not, back at that time, we only had three TV stations. So it wasn't a whole lot to see. And so the way people watch TV now, you really didn't watch it like that.

[28:00]

It might be you'd watch it on the weekend, or you might watch it, you know like, at night. And I know, you know, as I got older I would—I might turn it on in the morning before I went to school but, I don't remember watching that. Now, I was—I remember when Martin—Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and then after that there were riots in Detroit. And I also remember another time that there were riots in Detroit. And when you looked at those situations, some of the things that happened after that—one of the them that I remember is that there over twenty black men who were found at the bottom of the river. And who had been shot and killed by the police.

[29:00]

And there was this one individual who was on his way to work, didn't know about the curfew, and the police told him to stop, he was walking toward the bus. Well he happened to be deaf. And they were telling him to stop, and of course he didn't—he didn't hear 'em—hear them. So they just riddled him with bullets. So—and then there was another in—incident where Reverend Franklin, Aretha Franklin's father, had a huge church in Detroit and he allowed a group, the Nation of Islam, to utilize the church. And there were—for a meeting—and there were men, women, and children in the church, and the police came to the church and just shot—completely shot up the church.

[30:00]

And fortunately no one was killed. But the police that they were—that they were—somebody was shooting at them first. However when they looked, you know, when they investigated they could not find a single bullet that was going out of the church, all of them were going into the church. So it gives you a different perspective of—I would say the, you know, those types of experiences make you nervous and fearful to be within the company of police officers. And that's not, you know, a traditional experience that many people have. But, of course, you know like, years went by then you did learn more about the corruption in the police force in Detroit and other major metropolitan cities.

[31:00]

So.

Utley: With all of that going on, was it—did you see more people following Mar—Dr. Martin Luther King's non-violent approach or did you see more leaning towards Malcolm X and the more militant protection approach?

Cain: Well, I think there's a—and the media has a lot to do misperception of Malcolm X's approach. And it wasn't—it really wasn't militant, it—but it was self-reliance. And the rhetoric that they used is, you know, highly offensive because they called white people Blue-Eyed Devils. But, my perception of that was that it wasn't a rhetoric that was intended for European Americans.

[32:00]

It was a rhetoric that was intended for the African Americans to realize that they could stand on their own two feet. They didn't have to look to the majority culture or the infrastructure for what Malcolm X called handouts. They could, you know, build up their own businesses and take care of themselves. And when you look at what the Nation of Islam did in terms of, you know like, rehabilitating individuals who were incarcerated, they—their strategy or their track record is better than anyone else's. They were able to rehabilitate, educate, and help them

to obtain gainful employment even if it was to have a business of their own or to work in some of the businesses of the Nation of Islam. So.

[33:00]

My perspective on Malcolm X is what he was saying is that it was about you had the capacity within yourself to succeed and you can't depend on someone else to do it. Now, with Dr. Martin Luther King, his was more of a spiritual uh, or—his was more not—well it was non-violent resistance and that was a little more difficult to, you know—I don't think I could have really gone to the South and allowed myself to be, you know like, have, you know like, dogs biting at me, or being beaten by billy clubs, or hosing turned on me.

[34:00]

I mean, that to me, was very, very scary. And the people who did it, they went through significant training in order to not resist. And so I don't think a lot of people realized how much training that they went through so that they could be as non-violent as they possibly could. So, there a lot of different way to resist, you know, inequities and the two of them were, you know, appeared diametrically opposed, but as they got, you know, time went by they were really coming closer to each other. And when Malcolm X went to Mecca he realized that you really could be friends with all cultures. Because when he went to Mecca he saw all, you know, people of all races, all colors, you know, there to worship together.

[35:00]

And so, his attitude was different when he came back, that you could have good relationships across cultures whereas before he did not think it was possible. And Martin—Dr. Martin Luther King was thinking that, you know, maybe there was another strategy that would be more effective than non-violent resistance. So, you know like, they were here, and they were coming closer together, and they were talking to each other. So it would have been very interesting to s—to have known what would have happened had they not been assassinated.

Utlej: Going back to what have historically been called the Detroit Riots, in 1967 there was probably the biggest one that's known publicly. Where were you when that occurred?

[36:00]

Cain: Sixty-seven. I was in high school and I didn't typically—I wasn't typically a person that was out on the streets. I wasn't that old yet, you know? They had curfews, but I would have been in home anyway. And, you know, anything I did it would be during the day. I'd come home from school and study [laughs] and I'd be in for the night. And usually if I went someplace it would be with my

parents. I don't think people were as mobile as they are now. And we lived in a neighborhood where there were no businesses. So around us, you didn't see any of the looting or any of the, you know, destruction, or any people yelling, or angry, or that type of thing.

[37:00]

So, we lived a very—I would say very insulated kind of um, environment where a lot of what was going on outside, and particularly during the riots, it didn't hit our backdoor. You could see it on TV, or you could hear it on the radio, and it was scary. And when we went to church we would have to go across town to go to church so in the car you could see some of the destruction that had occurred. But—and it did, you know, I mean, the fact that, you know, places were being burned down, people were being killed, you know that's—it's almost like you're in a warzone. But it wasn't at your backdoor.

[38:00]

So, I remember being, you know like, upset or disturbed but not—I don't remember necessarily, you know like, fearing for my life kind of thing.

Utle: All right. Heading back into the realm of education.

Cain: Okay.

Utle: After high school, you went to a university called Wayne State.

Cain: Yes.

Utle: Why Wayne State?

Cain: Wayne State University was in Detroit. I started when I was sixteen years old. And I wanted to go to—I wanted to go away. I wanted to go—and I didn't care where. And I think that the place that, in talking with my counselor, who really—and that's another issue. She didn't think I could go, you know like, anywhere.

[39:00]

But she didn't look at my grades, she didn't look at my SAT and ACT scores, you know, my SAT and ACT were over the 95 percentile, so I was getting a lot of mail from different universities. And so she said, "Well, I don't think you can go anywhere. You know, you can't go to, you know like, University of Michigan, you can't go to Michigan State, but maybe you could go to Eastern Michigan University." And so Eastern Michigan University was outside of the city of Detroit, so I would have been able to have a typical campus, you know, a tradition student environment. And so that's what I wanted to do, so I brought the

information home and my father said, "You're not going to Eastern Michigan University [laughs], you're going to Wayne State U"—[laughs]. So that's where I went, I went to Wayne State U[laughs]. Because that was my option [laughs].

[40:00]

Utley: All right. And—because that was—because Wayne State was in Detroit, did you have a campus experience or living at home?

Cain: Well, it—I initially lived at home. And took the city bus, you know, couple of city buses to get to the campus. And I was, you know, being so young and even though my high school was four thousand, you know, which was a really big high school, one of the biggest ones there. And it was in an old factory building that had, I think it was about eight stories [laughs]. And it's still—it's still there today but they moved the, you know, they built a new Cass Tech, but the building's still there. And it still looks as bad as it looked when I was there. It's not the same as over twenty thousand [laughs]. So I was terrified.

[41:00]

And I remember being so scared, and so terrified to be on this huge campus, and never being there before, and not knowing exactly where to go. And it's a commuter college; a lot of people did commute. And it's just spread out over several, you know, several blocks. I'd say maybe, maybe about six to eight blocks. So, you know, you might have a class in one building and then you might have to walk two, three blocks to get to class in your other building or something like that. So I just remember being so fearful or, you know, I mean it just such a new experience. And then of course after I was there for a little while, you know, you learn your way around and get to know everything. So it's not so bad. But I just remember that first day was [laughs] not like—not like it is now.

[42:00]

You know where they have a freshman come before schools starts and kind of orient them to the area [laughs].

Utley: Initially, you did live at home?

Cain: Yes.

Utley: After initially?

Cain: Then I moved into the dorm for—I probably stayed in the dorm for about a year. And what's interesting is they only had a women's dorm. They didn't have a men's dorm. And they had a curfew for the women's dorm. So you, you know, I think the curfew may have been like eleven o'clock or something like that. And

so, if you didn't make it in by whatever that time was, then you were out for the night. And I worked, you know so, I would work during, you know, during the morning that—and take my classes in, you know, work morning and afternoon and I would take my course—my course work in the late afternoon or—and the evening.

[43:00]

So, everybody else in the dorm didn't work [laughs]. They were there—they were really more like traditional students, so they took their classes during the day so they were there at night. And you know, there's, you know, interacting with each other. They had a kitchen at the end of the hall where you could cook if you wanted to. And so by the time I would get home after my classes, most of them would already be in the bed [laughs].

Utle: What was life like in the dorm? Living in the dorm with only women?

Cain: It was—you know like I said I was there very, you know, a very small amount of time. So I would interact more with them on the weekend then during the week because of my schedule. And it was, you know, I liked it. It wasn't a very, you know, I mean there a lot of conflicts.

[44:00]

I think it was, you know, it was my first time living on my own and I just absolutely loved it because I wanted to go away to school anyways so this gave me the opportunity to. Even though I wasn't out of the—my home—you know, where I lived, you know, but I was in a different environment other than my house. So I enjoyed—I enjoyed my roommates, enjoyed, you know, interacting with, you know, the people on the floor, the others on the floor and um.

Utle: All right. One of the biggest problems concerns that college students have today are financially related. When you went to Wayne State, what were your concerns about financially?

Cain: Well, the cost of an education at Wayne State University was significantly less than the cost of education today.

[45:00]

I could actually—I was working part time and actually had enough money to pay for my tuition [laughs]. And my parents paid for my first year, but I didn't want to live off my parents, you know, I felt like, I can work and why should they have to sacrifice to put, you know, put me through school? And I wanted to be independent, I wanted to, you know like, live on my own. And the job I got was—I was daycare center supervisor at my church [laughs] so it wasn't like, you

know, so it was a very friendly kind of job where, you know, like I'd—I was going to a place that I went every week from, you know, pretty much my entire life. But—I'm trying to remember how much it was. It was under—it was definitely under two hundred dollars for a quarter.

[46:00]

Maybe, like a hundred and sixty. And it was—if you took twelve credit hours, anything above that was free. So within a given quarter—so if a quarter—you didn't spend more than a hundred and sixty and you went—well you could four quarters if you want, because you could go for the summer, so two hundred times four is less than one class now I guess isn't it? [laughs] But the cost, you know, the cost of living was a lot less. The minimum wage \$4.25, but it was still really affordable.

Utle: That must have been very nice [Dr. Cain laughs]. What led you to a Sociology major?

[47:00]

Cain: I initially entered the university as a pre-Secondary Education major. I was planning to teach math. And after I was there, had been there maybe a year and a half, I decided that I probably would not fit in the education system because I felt like you should be able to reach every child. And you should be able to teach to their—that individual student's learning needs. Kind of like Leave No Child Behind [laughs]. And I didn't feel that that would be supported by the administration. And that what would be expected is kind of to teach to the middle. You know, so you'd lose the ones who needed more help, and then bore the ones who, you know, needed more challenge. And I decided that I wanted to be an Actuarial Statistician, because I loved the math.

[48:00]

And then, as I was majoring in math, I also took computer science courses—computer applications because there was no such thing as a computer science degree. And—so I changed from, you know, pre-Secondary Ed to majoring in math. And then, one of the courses that I needed was not going to be offered for a few quarters after my anticipated graduation, so while I was in—while I was in college—your first two years you take what they call Liberal Arts, they now call it General Studies, and so I took a little bit of everything. I took so many different courses. So I looked at which one could most likely be my major, and I had taken enough Sociology courses that I only needed maybe another four in order to major in it. So, switched my major to Sociology in order to graduate [laughs].

[49:00]

Utlely: That's a good as reason—a good of reason [Dr. Cain laughs] as any.

Cain: Well you know it's really interesting because they say the average college student will change their major three times. So I changed mine twice [laughs].

Utlely: Outside of class, what experiences did you have with clubs, social activities at Wayne State?

Cain: I was a member of the Association of Women Students. And I was also on the Debate Team. And they had a Black Student Union and it was more of a social interaction. And probably a little bit like the Multicultural Center here at Ball State where it's, you know, it was a physical location but it was within the entire student center. There was a huge room that was where the Black Student Union would meet.

[50:00]

And it's not as organized as some of the associations that you have now, but it was a place to go to study, you know, to meet people, network, play games, and—so those were—those were the three things that I was involved in.

Utlely: All right. Tell me a little bit more about the Debate Team.

Cain: The Debate Team—I'm not really sure why I decided that I wanted to do that. Maybe, you know, it was just intriguing to me. And after I got into it I realized how much work it really is, but it was still a lot of fun. We would be given a topic for the year and then you would be assigned to either debate the affirmative side or debate the negative side. And you would be assigned a team member, so the two of you would research every possible thing that you could think of, if it was the negative side.

[51:00]

Because you had to be prepared for any affirmative position that would come to you. Now for the affirmative side you could—you could focus on just the one that you selected. And so you do all your research to support that. So if I was on the affirmative side—and we would have all the different index cards with our research on it, and we'd have it indexed by subject. So I might have one big tray for affirmative, but I'd have two trays for the negative. And then my partner, you know, would have that as well and then we'd have to, you know like, really work well together. You know like, we'd have to decide, Are we going to do this or are we going to do that? And so, I really enjoyed it. We would travel to other universities and debate. Sometimes we'd win, which was very, very nice.

[52:00]

Sometimes we'd lose, but it wasn't so bad, you know, because it was still nice to, you know, do the traveling and actually compete. And then you could celebrate your colleague's wins so [laughs].

Utle: Greek life is a recognizable part of any university experience. Were you a part of any Greek organization?

Cain: No, I was not. I looked at pledging one of the service sororities. There were, you know, quite a few black, you know—they call it Divine Nine—black sororities that were on campus. And I'm not sure—and they would have their time when you could go talk to that organization to see if you may have interesting in pledging.

[53:00]

And, so I would go to the different—and I think they would be like teas (??) or something like that. And I did go to some, but some of the things that I saw on campus at that time I wasn't really, you know, willing to be part of it. It took a lot, you know, the pledge time was a huge effort. And it would take up a lot of your time and I didn't have that, you know, that length of time then. However, I did become a member of a sorority after, you know—as an alumni. So after graduation.

Utle: And what sorority was that?

Cain: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. And what's really significant about that sorority is that they actually participated in the um—

[54:00]

—the march for women to get the right to vote. And they were—they were women from Howard University who were probably like nineteen or twenty—pretty young. And at that time you couldn't go off campus without a chaperone, and it had to be a male chaperone. And in the history that I've read—I have not read who the chaperones were, I wish I knew that—but I would think that for a huge march like that, which would be mostly white women, it wouldn't be one of the black, male professors it would probably be one of the white, male professors. So I wonder how many people they had to talk to before they got someone who would be willing to chaperone them to participate in this march.

Utle: That's an interesting—

[55:00]

Cain: Yeah.

Utley: — piece of history there.

Cain: It is. So very, very forward thinking women. Very service minded.

Utley: Compared to your pre-college education, how many African American professors were there at Wayne State? That you met?

Cain: I don't remember, but it would not have been many. The majority of the teachers at—for undergrads at that time would be teaching assistants. So they would be individuals working on their doctorate. And they would have, you know like, a grad assistant but they would have a, you know, a teaching assistantship. And a lot of them were international students. Just about all my math teachers were international students, maybe one or two international faculty members.

[56:00]

And I remember the one that was from—I believe it was Czechoslovakia—he was very difficult to understand. He taught Linear Algebra. And he'd come in the room and just put matrices up on the board, but not really teach from the textbook. And so you'd write down everything he said, but it didn't relate to what was in the textbook so it was very hard [laughs]. And even—I took a course in Black Literature—but it was taught by a white, male faculty member. So that's—that was a—but it was a really good course, I really enjoyed it [laughs].

Utley: Looking back at all of your experiences while at Wayne State as an undergraduate, what would you say was the most stand-out memory that you will always remember?

Cain: I really loved learning so I loved having the freedom to select what I wanted to take.

[57:00]

And I probably had enough credit hours to have double majored, but they didn't do double majors back then, or even get two [laughs]—almost to get two degrees. I got to meet Muhammad Ali [laughs] and actually shake his hand [laughs]. And that was a real big memory for me. And 'course the Debate Team. And they would have, you know, different people come talk. At that time, what was going on was what they called the Biafran War. And so you had individuals who were Nigerians who had broken away. So there would be debates from those who, you know, were a part of the area that was called Biafra, which, you know, courses, you know, with all of—part of Nigeria.

[58:00]

So listening to different people, you know, have different opinions about the particular national topic. So being able to hear the discourse about, you know, political issues—Vietnam War was another issue. Women's rights. You know, all of that. And then, coming of age to vote [laughs] and, you know like, having different, you know, presidential debates that were being held on campus. So that whole college experience, I think there's nothing like it [laughs].

Utley: All right. After graduating from Wayne, what did you do?

[59:00]

Cain: Well there was a career fair, and I actually got a job as a First Line Manager Systems Analyst with, at that time it was Michigan Bell. So all those computer courses I took in the math department helped me get that job. And I—it's really interesting—I started out—I was making ten thousand dollars a year. Which was a lot of money back—when you think about four—four twenty-five as the minimum wage it was like more money than I could spend. And then the very next year I got a raise to twelve thousand. But one of the things that had happened to Michigan Bell is that there was a class action suit brought against them where they had not been promoting women.

[1:00:00]

And so, the women who had been hired—and it was before I actually got hired—but before then they were put into a management training program, you know, given the opportunity to move up and have an increase in their salary. So working in IT—in the information technology—is, you know, back then was quite lucrative [laughter].

Utley: Computers today are much more sophisticated—

Cain: Oh yeah.

Utley: —then when you worked there. But were the specifics of your job? What did you do?

Cain: I wrote computer applications. So I automated manual operations. And one of the things that I did that was something that nobody had ever done before and, you know, this is—

[1:01:00]

—When I think about it today, it's like, why would they have given that job to someone who had just gotten out of school? But—and maybe didn't think it would ever get done or something, but it's like, usually you'd give that type of assignment to someone who had a lot more experience. But they wanted to

determine—they would provide for the—for their employees one free, you know, one free phone line, you know, where you lived. And at an—if you had another residence, you know like, some people had summer homes—they would provide 50% off at a second residence. And they wanted to match to see if people were having more than what was allowed. So their payroll records were on one computer system, and their billing records were—was on a different computer system.

[1:02:00]

So the payroll was on what was called a Burroughs computer at that time, Burroughs mainframe, which is now Unisys. And then the billing records were one the IBM system. So no one had ever taken the records from the Burroughs system and fed them into the IBM system. And I had to work with the systems people and do different tests in order to make that happen. And it took a long time, you know, more than a year. And of course back then, the mainframes, you know, they were huge—took up a whole room, and did not have the processing power of what your PC has today. So if I submitted a job to run, I wouldn't get it back for three days.

[1:03:00]

Because they could only run so many, you know, programs at a time. So it would sit in the queue, and then I'd have to wait for the results, and then see if I had to make changes to the program in order to get it right. So the computer time was way more expensive than the people time, so you spent a lot of in what they called desk checking to make sure you didn't have any errors because your time was less valuable than the computer. But then, when I finally finished—of course I found, you know, a lot of people were getting more services than they were supposed to. And I believe, you know, and I'm guessing on this number, but I'm thinking that annually it saved them about thirty thousand dollars. Which, you know, back then was a lot of money [laughs].

[1:04:00]

Utley: Wow [Dr. Cain laughs]. You—that's an amazing job.

Cain: Oh absolutely.

Utley: What made you decide to continue on to get a master's? With a job like that, you—

Cain: Well—

Utley: —really didn't need to.

Cain: At—I had originally planned to go all the way through working to my doctorate and once I got the job—of course, given an assignment like that, it was a lot more demanding than I had anticipated. So I wasn't able to work and go to school at the same time so as they say, life gets the in way. You know, ten years go by. I'm trying to think how many more years went by before I actually got my master degree. And then another ten years went by before I got my doctorate. But my original intent was always to, you know, go right through to get to doctorate. But [laughs]. And that job, you know, I always—my first love has always been teaching.

[1:05:00]

And one of the things after had been there for awhile—I wanted to train analysts—programmers and analysts. Because when we came in, we went through a training and I felt like I could do it significantly better because I would focus more on the things you do 80% of the time. And at—now we call that accelerated learning. Back then there wasn't a name for it. And then the things that you do 20% of the time, you could figure that out from a manual, you know, should it ever come up. But you needed to be very adapt, very adapt at completing the task that you do the majority of the time. So that's what I focused on creating developing a curriculum for and I used to train programmers and analysts.

[1:06:00]

And I would, you know, utilize others in the department to deliver, you know, the different workshops. And at one of the places that I worked they had a six month initial analyst training program that I told them I could make that six weeks and they'd be more—they would be able to be totally independent. Usually after the six months it was maybe about another year before the programmers were able to work on their own. So I always integrated education into what I did. And I left Detroit and moved to Little Rock, Arkansas to get away from the bad weather, the snow and the ice [laughter]. And from—and then when they started getting snow in Little Rock, they got five inches one year, and it completely shut the city down because they didn't have snow removal equipment or anything. And I says, "Well I don't wanna be in snow and ice."

[1:07:00]

So I moved out to California and I lived in San Diego and I lived up in the Bay area, San Jose area, and Fremont. And I also worked at San Jose and Burlingame, which is close to where the San Francisco airport is. And then, when I moved to Fort Wayne with my husband whose job relocated here, I couldn't—there wasn't a job in IT. And so I started my own businesses as a organizational management consultant doing mostly training programs. And then I also did like strategic training planning. So assisted organizations with developing a training program

for the entire corporation. And I did that when I was in San Diego with the San Diego Data Processing Corporation.

[1:08:00]

We got funding from the state of California to retrain employees, you know, who had mainframe computer skills—computer application skills—to client server skills. And the premise is, instead of laying off all your workers and hiring new people, with the retraining you could keep them. And they were also more valuable because they had the client relationships and the businesses knowledge of the client's businesses. And that particular program required that you—you had to have a hundred hours of training per employee and you had to retain the employee six months after the training in order to be reimbursed for that individual. You also had to demonstrate that they had developed the knowledge.

[1:09:00]

So you would do pre and post-tests, and then that they were able to utilize that knowledge back on the job, so you had skill application models. So you assessed their ability to apply the skills and you assessed their knowledge. And if it wasn't over a certain percentage you would not get reimbursed. If they could not apply the skills you wouldn't get reimbursed. And if they left the company you did not get reimbursed. So it got over 85% reimbursement and it—and the only thing was for the people who did not stay, you know, past the six months. If, you know like, somebody moved out of town or got a different job. And it was the highest that they'd ever had in the state of California. So they had me come to Sacramento to the state capital to talk to the employment training panel about how to make it more successful because so many companies were not successful.

[1:10:00]

And many of them, once they were awarded, the reimbursement funding, they felt the administrated—the administration to actually implement it would be too costly. And they would just say walk away from it, and not do it [laughs].

Utley: So the weather is what got you in San Diego.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: But to um—California has so many universities there. What made you pick the university of Phoenix for your master's?

Cain: What was really interesting was that they have really strong recruitment. Because I wanted to get my master's, but looking at like San Diego State University, it was really—even at the master level—it was really geared for someone who was full time student. Not someone who was a full time employee. And so there was just

no—I couldn't take classes everyday, you know, I was working sixty hours or more a week.

[1:11:00]

And with University of Phoenix, they had a San Diego campus so I actually—I wasn't taking the classes online, I was actually physically in a classroom. But it was once a week, you know, four hours say like on one night a week. And it was always the same night. And then you worked in your cohort group in your, you know like, your—well you had a cohort where you went through the entire program with the same students. And then you were broken up into smaller groups and you worked on group projects with the same people, your same team, for every class. So you'd spend four hours a week with your group, four hours in class, and then you'd—you had four hours to spend reading and doing the individual assignments. And so two thirds of your work was—could be done when it worked into your schedule and you only had to, you know, carve out that four hours for one night a week.

[1:12:00]

And so that was doable. And it—every, you know, every reason I had why I couldn't go the recruiter had a reason why, you know—that accommodate that. So they were really geared to the nontraditional student. And once I started, I just absolutely loved it because I was—I did my master's in Organizational Management and that directly related to my job. At that time I was Director of Training for San Diego Data Processing Corporation. So almost every class I took related specifically to what I was doing at work and I could utilize what I was learning, you know, what I was doing on my job in my assignments. So it, you know, it was like, double, you know, double duty [laughs].

[1:13:00]

Dual benefit.

Utlej: So the university was a perfect fit, but what about the city? How did San Diego compare to Detroit, there where you lived your entire life?

Cain: Well I loved San Diego, but I really loved Little Rock too. It was—I enjoyed living there. The South is very, very friendly [laughs]. Now in Detroit—Detroit was very segregated. 'Course I—Little Rock was segregated too, but it was, it was a very—the South is just a whole different culture than the North. And then San Diego was harder to adjust to because it was not friendly. It wasn't unfriendly, but not friendly people were into themselves, very individual. You could live next door to someone and not even know their name for twenty years, you know. But—so it was a bit of an adjustment to—when I first came there.

[1:14:00]

And so after awhile—and I had family out there too so I had, you know like—initially I interacted more with family and then with the people I met either at work or, you know, in the community or wherever. So—but the weather, there's just no beating the weather. You know if you didn't have anything else you could live there for the weather [laughs]. Three hundred and sixty three days of sunshine [laughs].

Utley: You mentioned earlier that you were married.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: Did you meet him in San Diego?

Cain: Yes, I did.

Utley: And what was his name—is his name?

Cain: Raymond.

Utley: And how did you two meet? [Dr. Cain laughs]

Cain: We met in the alley. The bowling alley [laughs]. I had lived in San Diego for—

[1:15:00]

—Can't remember how many years. One, two, three probably four years and moved up to the Bay area for a couple and then came back. And his brother—I had been in a bowling league with his brother. And so his brother and his wife, you know like, we bowled together and we socialized together, played cards and all that. So I was in—back in San Diego—at a—and I was in a bowling tournament club in the bowling alley. And his brother was there and—Wilbert was his name—and he was the one who introduced me to Ray. And so [laughs] I guess as they say, the rest is history [laughs]. What a unique place to meet somebody [laughter].

Utley: Okay. At—from San Diego you moved to Fort Wayne.

[1:16:00]

Cain: Yes.

Utley: That was following a job?

Cain: Following my husband. He—his job relocated here. And so people asked me, “How could you leave San Diego and come to Fort Wayne, Indiana?” And I told them, “I came for love.” And I tell my husband every winter how much I love him to be here and not San Diego [laughter].

Utley: So your plan was always to get your doctorate.

Cain: Yes.

Utley: And you were up in Fort Wayne. You had many different options, but you chose Ball State. Why was that?

Cain: Well, I wanted to get a doctorate in Adult Education. And the doctorate program was Adult, Higher, and Community Education.

[1:17:00]

The two areas I was very interested in was adult and community—but I was also interested in higher Ed because I tutored all my life. I started tutoring when I was in elementary school. And so I’ve always done some level of teaching. I did Sunday school teaching—I started that when I was ten years old. And I worked with, you know, underprivileged children by tutoring, you know—one of the jobs I had in Detroit with Michigan Bell—they would actually let us go on our lunch hour, once a week to a school, elementary school, and tutor children. So I wanted to, you know—I felt that the universities and the K-12 schools needed a closer collaboration, as well as even the businesses.

[1:18:00]

So I saw getting the doctorate as a way to somehow work between the K-12 schools and—I didn’t want to be a teacher. But I wanted to, you know, either work as an administrator or faculty at the higher education level, but connected to underprivileged children. And as I looked at different programs—really wanted something where I lived in Fort Wayne. And there was no other program like it. And I looked at a couple of programs that were there, you know, there was Ed Leadership, the EDS program. But those were mostly geared toward K-12 educators and administrators as opposed to adult educators.

[1:19:00]

So I finally decided, you know, this is the only program anywhere close. You know, it’s not ideal because it’s eighty miles away, but it’s my option and it’s the program I want and so I applied and it proved to be true. It was the best program [laughs].

Utlely: Excuse me. What was getting your doctorate like at Ball State? What was the atmosphere?

Cain: Well, again, I was a nontraditional student and the program was designed for that. The courses were offered at night on five Saturdays over the sixteen week semester or online. So I could work and still take the classes. And the—for me, I had, you know, I'd done training education, you know, like all my life and what I got out of the program was the theory behind the practice.

[1:20:00]

You know, usually people get theory first and then put it into practice. Well I already had the practice, and so I wanted to connect it to the theory. And I've always loved education, you know like—it reminded me a lot of, you know, when I was an undergrad. Like a kid in a candy store. So I just really enjoyed the environment. What I had to learn, how I could pull the two things together, you know, the theory with my practice and my experience. And they utilized adult learning theories in the class. So you're—and I call that now practicing what you teach [laughs]. So they practiced what they taught.

[1:21:00]

The class sizes were usually very small, and it was a true community, you know, with the faculty as well as with students.

Utlely: What were the people like in the Ball State campus, in the surrounding Muncie area?

Cain: Well many—the majority of the students in the program were European American and most of them come from small or rural communities so their cultural experiences were totally different than mine. And when I started the program, my first class, I was older than all of the students and the professor [laughs]. So, you know, there was the generational difference, there were cultural differences, and then there were career aspiration differences.

[1:22:00]

So after—I think after I'd been in the program for about maybe a semester—semester or two, something like that—I connected with another individual in Fort Wayne who was starting the program. She was European American and we would carpool together. And we became joined at the hip [laughs]. If you saw one, you saw the other. And we would, you know like, collaborate and say, "Okay what classes are you taking? I'm going to take this." You know, if I planned to take something else and that wasn't what she wanted I'd switch over to that, so I could take that later or, you know, or—and I might have a course that

she did not take so, you know, there may be a time that I would be going back and forth without her, but for the most part we were, you know, always there together.

Utle: And what was her name?

[1:23:00]

Cain: Marge(??) Treff. She's now faculty at Indiana University.

Utle: All right. And what were the years that you worked on your doctorate here at Ball State?

Cain: 2004 to 2009.

Utle: At that time, many people wanted to say that, you know, discrimination in schools had mostly gone away. What did you experience—did that hold true when you were working on your master's at University of Phoenix and your doctorate here at Ball State?

Cain: University of Phoenix was a little different in that they weren't typical—they weren't, you know, typical faculty like, you know, tenure track faculty like at a—at most universities, er—public universities.

[1:24:00]

And they were practitioners in the field, and they were provided with, you know, some training to teach and given the facilitator guide. So they were given the curriculum, you know, they could make adjustments to it, but their real strength was in the, you know, in that particular field. So you were really, you know—the courses really focused more on the practical application and were relevant to your business. So I found that to be extremely useful, you know, because I didn't have to try to integrate it in, it was, you know, a natural part of the program. And in the master degree program—and may even be true at the undergrad, I'm not sure but, you have to have work experience before you can be—apply for the program.

[1:25:00]

Because of, you know, because of that format. So I don't see—I don't see where it was as much of an issue at University of Phoenix. Now, at Ball State, Ball State was a undergrad university. So it—all of their rules—the administration was really geared toward undergrads, not nontraditional students. Not, you know, for individuals who live in another city and are coming here. And it's like, when I first started here you had to pay your tuition in person. And they closed at five o'clock. Well if you worked at five o'clock there's no way you could physically get here. You know, they wouldn't take a credit card over the phone back then,

they didn't have the online payments services, and they did—I think for the one semester I was here they did have the phone service.

[1:26:00]

But they discontinued it because nobody else was using it, you know, they didn't feel like they needed it. So for—so a lot of the things that they employed really worked for those who were always on campus. And there are many things that are very linear in the way that they—very Euro-centric. And it was very difficult for a nontraditional student to engage or to get needs met because of that. And it becomes institutionally oppressive because you're leaving out a whole culture, you know? If it's a culture of nontraditional, if it was a culture, you know, by racial ethnic group.

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At the time, you know, the majority of the individuals, particularly in the higher positions, deans and up, were all European American, and in many cases European American male. And the way they view things is through their cultural experiences. And so the rules and policies are made up so that, what they experienced, a person could be successful. But if you did not have that experience you may not be successful, and it was your fault. You know, there was no exceptions. And with my, you know—I'm also director of a program now, and I work with a lot of nontraditional students, and I can really understand, you know, the challenges that they have.

[1:28:00]

Because I've also experienced that. And so I look for, you know, possible solutions that will work for them. I look for where is their flexibility. And they may not know where it is because they're not as familiar with the university. And sometimes, even when I look, it's not there. And there's—and what's needed is not something that would be very difficult for the university to offer, it's just that they never thought of it. So the bias, you know, in many cases is implicit, it's not intended to be bias. But if you don't have that experience, you can't even fathom that that's a problem. And I think that we have a lot of that here.

Utley: All right. So what would you say changes that are needed would be for Ball State?

[1:29:00]

Cain: You need a much more culturally diverse group of individuals who are at the table to make the decisions and to recognize that your experience may not be universal. And there've been some situations in—just recently happened here, and I don't know how aware you are of it, with the—they had a diversity dialogue, a

Beneficent Dialogue last week and students are saying that the university needs to be more inclusive and supportive of diversity. And the university has a diversity policy and they really believe that, you know, they do support and advocate for diversity. But the—there's no vehicle for them to know—to find out—how individuals are hurting.

[1:30:00]

Because they're saying, "Well if you don't say it, if you don't report it, then it must not be here." And then if you do report it, and you have individuals who don't like what you're hearing, you might face retribution. So it prevents things from bubbling up. And you're saying that it's got to come up for you to do anything, rather than you seeking it out, and I think that's the issue. You got to seek it out. Kind of like that—what do you call it—Undercover Boss? Before they went undercover, they did not know the problems in their operations. Because it never bubbled up. And it's not going to bubble up if you're expecting it to come from the bottom because everything in between is to keep the status quo as usual.

[1:31:00]

So it's like, you have to go undercover or you have to change the paradigm where it's okay for people to say what they're really experiencing and feeling.

Utlej: All right. Let's move to the community for a second. I know you said that you've been tutoring since you were in elementary school and you've always felt that education is very important.

Cain: Yes.

Utlej: Tell me a little about the It Is Well With My Soul program.

Cain: When I came to Indiana, one of the things that I said to myself, "Self, I feel like"—and I moved here in the nineties, midnineties—"This is like the seventies. They're stuck in the 1970s." And the kind of issues we were dealing with back there, that's where—that's where they are here.

[1:32:00]

And then I also said, "Well, you're part of—if you're not of the solution, you're part of the problem." Nobody needs you to tell them what's wrong. You know, because many people already know. But if you're not willing to roll up your sleeves and do something about it—so the institution of racism is just rampant, I mean just unbelievable, in my opinion, in Indiana. And there's a national research study that was done on intentional job discrimination for forty-six states, including Indiana, including Fort Wayne that substantiated that. So I was

involved in different types of racial dialogues; Socratic dialogues, and then I also got involved in study circles, I became a certified facilitator and a certified trainer of facilitators. And in having support groups of the facilitators, one of the things that came up, particularly for the facilitators of color is that they felt like they were having the same experience no matter how many times they went through the study circles.

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And that European Americans come to the dialogue thinking we're post racial, that racism doesn't exist. So the participants of color are recalling all, you know, all of these examples, their day-to-day experiences with institutional racism. So it's like you're pouring out your heart, you're going through this traumatic experience, and then the length of time is almost up, because it's six weeks, and you go through it again and it's another group of European Americans who think we're post racial. And *It Is Well With My Soul* came out of that experience as a way to really look at what would be racial healing.

[1:34:00]

And it was specifically for African Americans initially. But when we received the fundament—and we received modest funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and we are a part of their five year American Healing Initiative—it was to really focus on internalized racism, and how to identify it and heal from it. But we had various offers, or solicitations, to do it within a university at that time that was in Fort Wayne and also with some of our colleagues who were other cultures; Latino, Asian, European American. And so back in 2003 I had done this program where we had a workshop for European Americans on Whiteness, Identity, Power, and Privilege and for African Americans at that time on internalized Racism, and then a third one on multiculturalism.

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So we had the components to it, so we were able to develop a curriculum that encompasses all cultures. Delivered it at an undergrad level at a university in Indiana and the—I mean in Fort Wayne—and then when I took a job here at Ball State, I was able to use that curriculum for a seminar in Adult and Community Education at the graduate level. And it's been an amazingly positive experience for the students. It involves understanding the social construction of race, historical inequalities, racism, power and privilege in America, you know, and that's our focus, the racial timeline. And then looking at your family history, as a way of instilling a sense of cultural pride in you learning about all your different cultural identities and how they impact your cultural lens and how you see the world and to really get exposed to how others see the world different than you do.

[1:36:00]

And you have to present your history because the healing comes in the presentation and the hearing, and you also focus on the positionality of race in your ancestry. And then the last component was a community engagement project where you learned about social action, social justice, community engagement, community mobilization and then put it into practice where you would identify an organization that you'd work with—and it would be group of students not just—usually not just one—to do something with that community agency, not for it. So that has been a very powerful experience because it's hard, particularly at the graduate level, to work with community partners and community stakeholders because their timetable is not the same as your timetable, and what you want to do maybe totally different than what they want to do.

[1:37:00]

So it really takes a lot of meeting, negotiating, understanding, and willingness to be flexible in order to make something happen that's really substantive.

Utle: All right. There's so much more I would like to ask you, but we're about out of time so before we close the interview is there anything that I haven't asked that you would really like to talk about so that people will know more about your life, your career, or Ball State experiences?

Cain: Well, I absolutely loved my Ball State experience in—as a student as well as, you know, now as a faculty member. But there—

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—I think, I think there's just so many opportunities here the university has set up for engagement at different levels and organizations and even the ability for you to create, you know like, event work with individuals to—who can support and nurture you, mentor you. And it's, you know, it has such historical significance as it began as a teacher's college. And the many ways in which they provide—they train educators I think is extremely important. And I think one of the most important ones, of course, is Adult and Community because that's my focus, but all of them are important. And so I'm—I feel very blessed [laughs] very blessed to be a part of the Ball State community.

[1:39:00]

Utle: All right. On behalf of the Ball State University African American Alumni Oral History Project, I'd like to thank you for your participation. Thank you very much.

Cain: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

[1:39:47]

End of interview